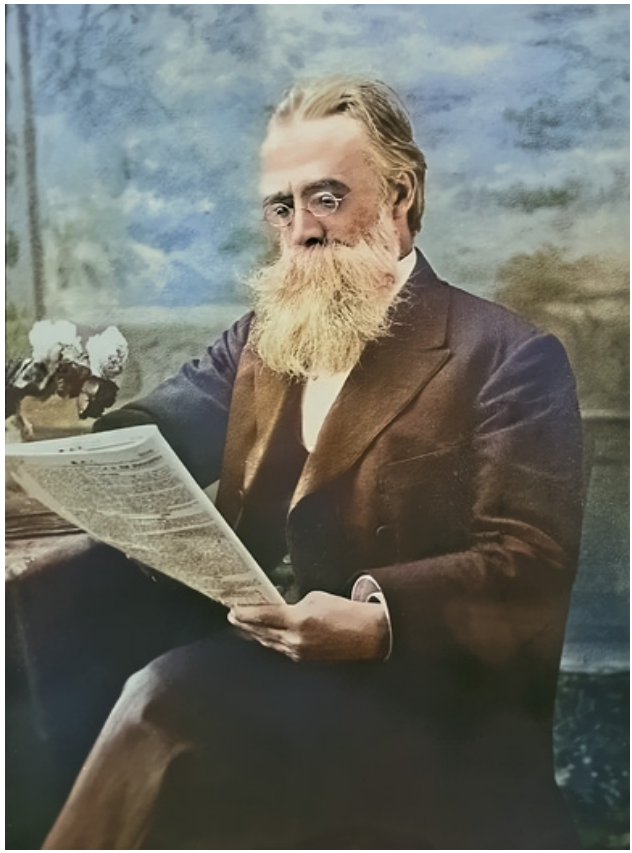

William E. A. Axon, M.A.,LL.D.,F.R.S.L. (1846-1913)

From the *Vegetarian Messenger*, February 1914

AXONIANA

WILLIAM EDWARD ARMYTAGE AXON (1846-1913) AND THE COMMUNITIES OF PRINT

Lucy M Evans

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFBAxon Family Book and additional papers
ALAAmerican Library Association
APAxon Papers (WEAA) at the John Rylands Research Institute and Library, University of Manchester Library
BLBritish Library
BMLBritish Museum Library
BNABritish Newspaper Archive
DNB Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
EAxon Papers (Ernest Axon) at the John Rylands Research Institute and Library, University of Manchester Library
GA *Manchester Guardian* Archive at the John Rylands Research Institute and Library, University of Manchester Library
GuardianManchester Guardian
IOGTIndependent Order of Golden Templars
JRLJohn Rylands Research Institute and Library, University of Manchester Library
LA Library Association
LAALibrary Assistants' Association
LCASLancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society

LNQ Local Notes & Queries, Manchester Guardian
L&YRLancashire and Yorkshire Railway
LYRSLancashire and Yorkshire Railway Society
MCLManchester Central Library
MCLAManchester Central Library, Manchester Archives and Local Studies
MLC Manchester Literary Club
MSS Manchester Statistical Society
N&QNotes & Queries
OEDOxford English Dictionary
RSL Royal Society of Literature
*TLCAS*Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society
VMVegetarian Messenger
VS Vegetarian Society
WEAAWilliam Edward Armytage Axon and his family often abbreviated his name to WEAA.

PERMISSIONS
WEAA's descendants have generously provided stories, papers, photographs, and ephemera with permission to use.

I am grateful to the following:
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INTRODUCTION: A VERSATILE MANCHESTER MAN[1]

Manchester Men and Women knew they had arrived when they featured in that chronicle of success, *Manchester Faces and Places*. By the age of forty-six William E A Axon (WEAA) had earned his place in its pages.[2] He had made his mark as a librarian, journalist, linguist, scholar, and social reformer. He had authored hundreds of articles, pamphlets, poems, books, edited and translated others. Antiquarians, artists, doctors, writers, and activists claimed him as a friend and he operated within multiple networks, local, national, and international.

WEAA would not be dismayed that well over a hundred years later his fame has largely departed. He had cornered the market in literary obituaries, he had investigated many a bibliographic mystery but accepted cheerfully that most of these writers and their works would pass into obscurity. He could describe with pragmatic fondness ‘some old books which our grandfathers may have read but which now usually sleep undisturbed upon the library shelves.’[3]

Yet he survives better than many other Manchester Men. Researchers still make use of his pioneering studies. In recent years his name has cropped up in connection with such diverse topics as the anti-caste movement, civil rights, dialect studies, disability, economics, folklore, folksong, food reform, humanism, Lancashire history, libraries, linguistics, literature, medical data, natural history, pandemics, Platonism, public art, Sabbatarianism, shorthand, social science statistics, spelling reform, through to temperance, vegetarianism, and vivisection. One modern historian referred to WEAA's article on the complex tale of Bishop Atherton as 'a small model of sensible Victorian erudition.'[4] Those encountering WEAA in specific contexts might not realise that one man encompassed all these roles.

The unifying factor in WEAA's multi-dimensional life was that one way or another he turned everything he did into print. As Simon Young recently commented in his article on Lancashire folklore writers, 'The most prolific Manchester writer of this generation (and perhaps of any generation) was the extraordinary W.E.A. Axon

(1846-1913).'[5] And folklore was only one of his preoccupations.

WEAA could have walked out of the pages of George Gissing's *New Grub Street*.[6] He knew 'the dangers and disappointments of those who adopt the profession of letters.'[7] Yet, unlike Gissing's bitter hacks, WEAA never lost his love of research, literature, and writing, always supported by the networks of likeminded comrades, some of whom he had known since childhood.

It was an exciting time for ambitious writers. Increasing literacy, free libraries, new local newspapers, cheap printing, all created demand for poems, stories, dialect, articles, pamphlets, and books. Best of all as a launch were the corresponding journals like *Notes & Queries* (*N&Q*) that depended entirely on readers for content. WEAA and his comrades, often self-educated, enthusiastically obliged.

This history of WEAA is also a history of the print communities and readership that nurtured him, provided a vehicle for his campaigns, an income, and an enduring shape to his busy life.

SOURCES: DISCOVERING WEAA

Abundance of Riches
There are substantial resources for studying WEAA, especially in the John Rylands Research Institute and Library (JRL) and in

Manchester Central Library Archives and Local Studies (MCLA). WEAA's descendants provided me with invaluable material. More came from branches of the family that had adopted him as a baby.

Axon Papers

WEAA was a prolific letter writer. From the age of eighteen he filed letters from correspondents. In 1936 his son Ernest sorted out the 'vast mass of letters,' adding in WEAA's collections of autograph letters, bookplates, unpublished pieces, and cuttings, as well as his own typed letters and handwritten notes. The archive of over 7000 letters from over 1850 correspondents was purchased in 1978 by JRL. These are now known as the Axon Papers (AP).[8]

AP forms an unprecedented jumble of scholars, publishers, librarians, reformers, artists, and writers. Eminent names rub shoulders with WEAA's Manchester neighbours. There are around a hundred AP letters written by WEAA.

Manchester Guardian Archive

For thirty years WEAA was a journalist with the *Manchester Guardian* (*Guardian*). In 1971 the whole business archive was entrusted to JRL. The *Manchester Guardian* Archive (GA) has proved invaluable in reconstructing WEAA's *Guardian* career.

Axon [i] ana at Manchester Central Library

The Manchester librarian Mr John Albert Green greatly admired his dear friend WEAA. He assiduously collected WEAA material including ephemera, photographs, letters, cuttings, copies of

WEAA's articles, and records of the Moss Side Branch Library, their joint enterprise. All were given to Manchester Central Library (MCL).

WEAA and his friends regularly used terms such as Shakespeariana, Tennysoniana, and Goldsmithiana in homage to favourite authors and their works. Following the tradition Mr Green labelled one folder as 'AXON[I] ANA Papers Essays & Poems By William E. A. Axon, Collected by J. A. Green, 1917.'[9]

Three Articles

Contemporary sketches together with the tributes, memorials, and obituaries that followed WEAA's death provide critical information, supplemented by the entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*DNB*). In addition, there are three key articles.

The first article is the closest we ever get to an interview with WEAA. It appeared in the *Biograph*, 1879, written by an E.R.C.'[10] Given the lively style E.R.C. might well be WEAA's friend, the actor E Romaine Callender.

The second is Robert Walmsley's paper *Dr. Axon - Manchester Bookman*, read before the Manchester Society of Book Collectors on 19 March 1964.[11] Robert Walmsley based his paper on the 'hitherto inaccessible material'[12]

of the AP archive he had purchased from Geoffrey Axon's executors, later selling this to JRL.

The third is from Terry Wyke who reprised Walmsley's research, supplemented by his own investigations, in an article for the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society.[13] As a Manchester historian, there is none better to understand WEAA and the conclusion that 'William Edward Armytage Axon's life was even busier than Walmsley has suggested' is well evidenced throughout the article.

We Two

There are four lines of descent, running from WEAA's daughters Sophie and Rosie, from his son Ernest, and from the daughter of his second marriage, Dorothy. WEAA's eldest daughter Sophie married her childhood sweetheart Joseph George Haddow, known as Joe. They emigrated to New Zealand, later followed by Rosie. Sophie died in 1942, and the grieving Joe recorded their partnership of over sixty years, starting from 1883 when they were neighbouring children in Manchester. This unpublished memoir, *We Two,* affords a rare insight into WEAA's household.

Axon Family Book

Ernest's great grandson Roger Axon looks after the Axon Family Book (AFB), a locked album of family trees, photographs, sketches, notes, and ephemera. I was allowed access to this and to other miscellaneous items.

AFB proved excitingly to be not just an album, but a publication issued by the eugenicist Francis Galton. The *Record of Family Faculties* was printed with forms for recording an individual's physical and personal characteristics.[14]

Galton offered a prize of £500 for the best family records sent in by purchasers of *Record of Family Faculties*. The Axons did not enter the competition but filled in the forms, keeping an extensive record of even distant relations in their family book.

Nulla Dies Sine Linea

As an aspiring author WEAA journeyed through the maze of free libraries, corresponding journals, local newspapers, printers, small publishers, and club magazines. These were the mechanisms that enabled WEAA and other self-educated young people, to realise the dream of words made print. He never stopped writing, from his youth to final days, exemplifying the motto of the eighteenth-century Leeds antiquarian, Thomas

Wilson, *Nulla Dies Sine Linea (Not a Day Without a Line).*

WEAA was an obsessive writer, yet he never operated in a vacuum. It was his guiding principle that writers had a responsibility to share knowledge for the public good, not to hoard for private gain. WEAA knew many of his readers were short of time and money and he tried to make his writings accessible through cheap pamphlets. He delighted in all methods of communication, becoming a popular speaker at all sorts of venues.

A private man, WEAA believed the personal should be kept out of writing and he largely achieved this. Yet close reading of his works, like dusting for fingerprints, yields clues. He left plenty of traces. Not all his works, however, are identifiable.

Bibliographic Challenge

WEAA tumbled from one form to another, producing dialect sketches, biographies, stories, essays, poetry, translations, reviews, and newspaper columns. His pieces appeared in various shapes, sometimes as slightly different versions. Friends attempted and failed to identify the full corpus. It is still an impossible task as much was published anonymously or under pseudonyms. Robert Walmsley, commented that, 'How much of W. E. A. Axon's writing is buried in the files of the Guardian one cannot quite tell - most of it is unsigned.'[15]

There are clues, especially in the AP correspondence and the GA records. WEAA

included lists in the back matter of some of his publications, and a bibliography was provided by his friend, Charles W Sutton, in 1878 but with the admission, 'Many of his minor pamphlets and articles are omitted altogether.'[16]

In 1900 Mr Green proposed a full slip catalogue of his works, including items WEAA dismissed as trifles. This catalogue could be printed if required. Mr Green noted that, 'You appear to me to have gone through a very curious evolutionary process in your writing and this is shown by your sometime trifles becoming important articles. A full list is therefore essential.'[17] Whatever the devoted Mr Green managed of this demanding task has not survived. Another friend, Professor Azeglio Valgimigli, mentioned a brief list published in the *British Courier* in 1914. In some cases, I devised my own lists. For example, from 1866 to 1911 WEAA actively contributed to *N&Q*. I traced around 600 pieces, ranging from short questions and comments to full articles, some contributed under pseudonyms.

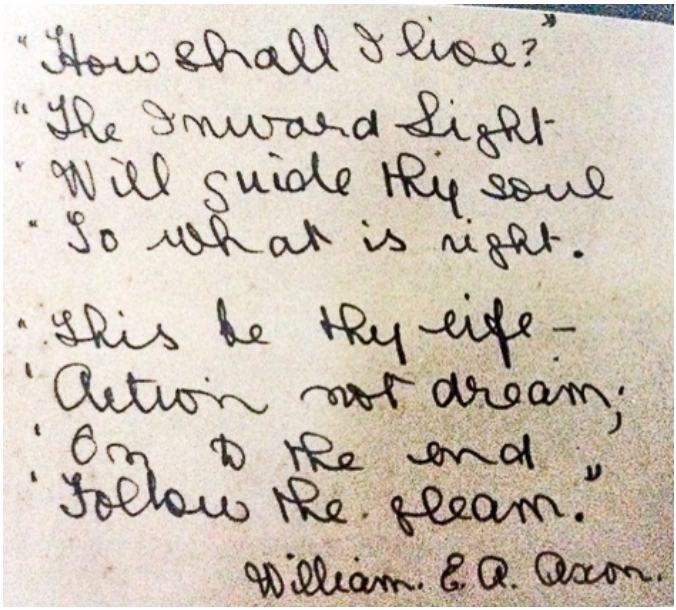
Online databases such as the British Newspaper Archive (BNA) and *Periodicals*

Archive Online the whole picture – the latter alone yielded a count of 409 articles by or about WEAA in forty-one journals. But again, the anonymous items escape.

A select bibliography is included as the Appendix.

Structure

WEAA once compared ‘dry-as-dust biographers’ with those ‘who show the real relation of an individual atom to the great sea of humanity.’[18] I doubt I have escaped being ‘dry-as-dust’ but I have tried to set this remarkable atom in the context of his family and friendship networks, in the communities of print, and in the circles where, as a humanist, he was forever striving for his visions of a peaceful world, a brotherhood for all humans – and animals


"How shall I live?"
"The Inward Light
"Will guide thy soul
"So what is right.

"This be thy life -
"Action not dream;
"On to the end
"Follow the gleam."

William E. A. Axon.

CHAPTER 1

YORKSHIRE PARENTS AND MANCUNIAN BIRTH

Mancunian and Lanky

WEAA was proud of his Mancunian origins, once joking that ‘he was the only Manchester man who was born in Manchester.’[19] As was common in an age of renting, he moved frequently but never lived outside Lancashire and Cheshire. John Higson, a Lancashire antiquarian, commented that WEAA ‘considers himself a true Lanky.’[20]

Yet both his birth parents came from and lived in Yorkshire. Shortly after WEAA was born, his mother left him in Manchester and returned home to Halifax.

Birthplace

According to family records WEAA was born at ten a.m. on 13 January 1846 at 12 Honduras Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock. The *Manchester Evening News* printed a 1905 photograph of the house, noting it as ‘the birthplace of William E A Axon a pioneering vegetarian.’[21] The photograph is from the MCLA collection.

Shirley Baker photographed the house in 1965 just before the land was purchased by

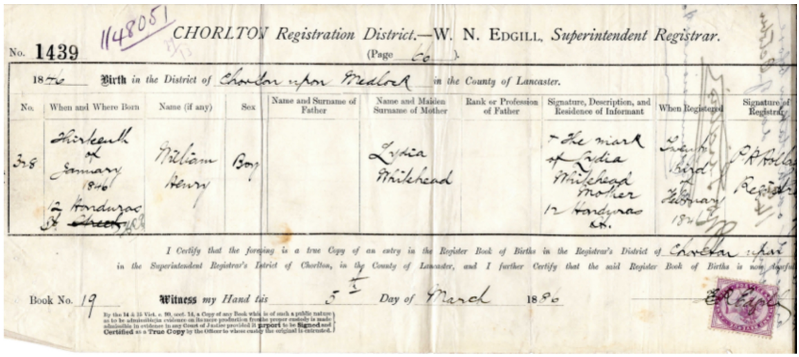
Manchester University and the streets demolished. Her picture of 'little flame-haired girls in neatly pressed frocks'[22] playing out in the Honduras back alleyway or croft was included in her 2017 exhibition.[23] The four Murray sisters, tracked down by the *Guardian* and *Manchester Evening News*, recalled a happy childhood at No.12 'with a real community feel.'[24] They remembered a two-up two-down house, with little room for playing and a tiny backyard used for the washing.

Chorlton-on-Medlock was a rural township absorbed into Manchester in 1838. By 1846 whilst the south side of the district was still picturesque with fine houses, gardens and trees, the north side ended close to the city centre at the boundary of the Medlock. Here was the notorious slum of Little Ireland. Honduras Street lay between the two extremes, a region of dense housing in the polluted proximity of factories.

Baptism
WEAA was illegitimate. His birth parents, Lydia Whitehead, and Edward Armytage, lived in Lightcliffe near Halifax. Lydia was born in 1829 according to the 1851 Census, 1830 according to WEAA's son, Ernest, so she was only around fifteen when she became pregnant.

Edward Armytage belonged to a wealthy manufacturing family. He was twice Lydia's age, widowed in 1843, and married for a second time soon after he made Lydia pregnant. Lydia was nurserymaid to his children. Both Edward and his brother Henry had business connections in Manchester, presumably why Edward moved Lydia there to give birth.
Lydia registered her son's birth on 23 February 1846 at the Chorlton District, giving her mark, denoting she was illiterate. The father was un-named, and the baby was registered as William Henry

Whitehead.



No. 1439 CHORLTON Registration District.—W. N. EDGILL, Superintendent Registrar. (Page 60)

1846 Birth in the District of Chorlton upon Medlock in the County of Lancaster.

No.	When and Where Born	Name (if any)	Sex	Name and Surname of Father	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother	Rank or Profession of Father	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant	When Registered	Signature of Registrar
348	Shirleyank 1st January 1846 2 Hindujac St Chorlton	William Henry	Boy		Lydia Whitehead		The mark of Lydia Whitehead Mother 12 Hindujac St.	1st February 1846	

I Certify that the foregoing is a true Copy of an entry in the Register Book of Births in the Registrar's District of Chorlton in the Superintendent Registrar's District of Chorlton, in the County of Lancaster, and I further Certify that the said Register Book of Births is now kept

Book No. 19 Witness my Hand this 5th Day of March 1896

By the 14 & 15 Vict. c. 99, sect. 14, a Copy of any Book which is of such a public nature as to be admissible in evidence on its mere production from proper custody is made admissible in evidence in any Court of Justice provided it purport to be Signed and Certified as a True Copy by the Officer to whose custody the original is intended.

There is a note on AFB family timeline that WEAA was supposed to be named after his father Edward Armytage and his maternal grandfather William Whitehead but was ‘registered by mistake’ as William Henry.[25] Did Lydia panic last minute at naming Edward, or did Edward not want his name used? Edward’s brother Henry perhaps came to mind instead.

Whatever the reason, on 28 June 1846 WEAA was christened as William Edward Whitehead at the Collegiate Church, Manchester Cathedral as it became a year later. Again, only his mother’s name was recorded. There is no prestige to be inferred by a baptism at the Collegiate Church since it was very much the parish church for all classes in the city.

Ernest stated that Lydia did not stay long with her son, ‘Soon after his birth W.E.A.A. was put out to nurse with a family who seem to have had no idea sutreat a child & he became rickety.’[26]

Axons to the Rescue

Ernest recorded how WEAA was saved by the Axon family:

‘Fortunately for him these people had some relations named Axon, young girls who fell in love with the lonely, delicate boy & persuaded their parents to take charge of him. This they did, first presumably on usual terms, but in a very few years regular payments ceased & he became as one of their own children, acquired their surname by repute, always spoke of them as relations and in every respect behaved as one of the family.’[27]

According to AFB, WEAA was adopted by the Axons around 1847. The ‘young girls’ were sixteen-year-old Maria, fourteen-year-old Charlotte, and twelve-year-old Elizabeth. Thomas Axon was the head of the Axon family. He was a joiner like his father, William Axon, before him. He was married to Elizabeth, daughter of a William Pownall, a yeoman in Rusholme. As well as Maria, Charlotte, and Elizabeth there was a son Albert, born in 1840. Albert’s descendants have preserved this photograph of Albert and his wife along with details of the family tree. This is the only known photograph of WEAA’s adopted relations.

Albert William Axon – WEAA's brother and his wife, Mary Ann Wilson

The Axon family lived at 15 Blanchard Street, Welbeck St, Greenheys, a rural district lying between Hulme, Chorlton-on-Medlock, and Moss Side. WEAA would write about local literary associations with Thomas De Quincey's family home, Greenhay, and with Mrs Gaskell's *Mary Barton*.[28] Greenheys was still green but 'Ardwick, Chorlton-on-Medlock and Hulme were among the first suburbs to be intensively settled,' and by 1844 a local

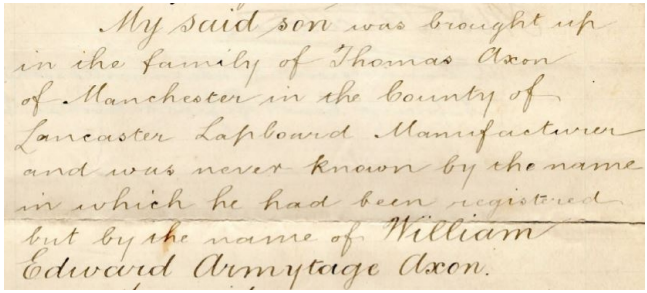
surgeon, alarmed at the disappearance of open spaces and the public health problems, called for their preservation.[29] 15 Blanchard Street was likely to be a terrace house and more salubrious than 12 Honduras Street. WEAA shared a hard but loving life with the Axons.

A Small Boy with a Confusion of Names
WEAA had no official right to the name Armytage or indeed to the Axon surname of his adopted family.

At some stage in his later boyhood WEAA started calling himself both William Edward Armytage Axon and William Edward Armitage Axon, also abbreviating his name to Willian E A Axon and to WEAA. William was the only part without muddle. Ernest and others in the family regularly referred to him as WEAA, understandably avoiding the complexities.

The tangle of his name caused bureaucratic confusion, particularly in the aftermath of his first wife's death on 18 July 1889. On 14 October 1889, Lydia appeared as a before a Commissioner of Oaths in Manchester. She swore to her son's identity and that he had never used his registered name of William Henry Whitehead, 'My said son was brought up in the family of Thomas Axon of Manchester in the County of Lancaster, Lapboard Manufacturer, and was never known by the name in which he had been registered but by the name of William Edward Armytage Axon.'[30] Lydia bravely endured this ordeal

for her son's sake.


My said son was brought up in the family of Thomas Axon of Manchester in the County of Lancaster Lapboard Manufacturer and was never known by the name in which he had been registered but by the name of William Edward Armytage Axon.

WEAA's Secrecy

Whilst not ashamed of his parentage WEAA treasured his privacy. The anonymous writer of a sketch in 1888 remarked rather brusquely 'of his early life we know nothing.'[31] He then added an accurate surmise, 'From the fact that he is entirely self-educated we infer he was not born with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth.'

Early biographical sketches tend to be silent on WEAA's origins, or to speculate in a D'Urbervillish fashion on ridiculous but prestigious connections. E.R.C in the *Biograph* article suggested, amongst other imaginative claims, that the Axons could be related to Joachim Axonius, a well-known traveller, poet, and savant of Belgium in the 17th century, and to William Axon, LL.B. of New College, Oxford, who wrote a Latin life of William of Wykeham. E.R.C. added, 'Mr.

Axon's third name indicates his claim of kinship with the well-known Yorkshire family of Armytage.'[32] As WEAA clearly had a hand in this article I wondered whether he was motivated by mischievous humour at the same time as wanting to establish a literary connection for his adopted family.

He certainly was interested in this seventeenth century, New College scholar, William Axon. A Mrs Hughes donated a copy of this William Axon's MS *Historia Wicchamica,* to MCLA in 1944.[33] Inside are newspaper cuttings from the *Local Notes & Queries* feature in the *Guardian*, edited by WEAA. The queries start with a letter from WEAA's alter ego, Dudley Armytage, on 6 April 1874 and continue with three responses. The first is from the Warden of New College, J.E. Sewell, the second from WEAA's clerical friend John Pickford, now Rector of Woodbridge, and the third from a 'Jane', defending the value of the work. WEAA and his wife Jane, for she was the contributor, were apparently both keen to establish a link and to enhance the reputation of this spurious ancestor.

More recently David Gregory, writing of

WEAA's role in the discovery of Lancashire folk song, produced another version, 'Axon was born in Yorkshire in 1846, seems to have lost both parents in early childhood, and was apparently brought up by a relative who made sure that he obtained rather more than a basic education.'[34] Gregory praises WEAA as innovative in valuing workers' culture from a middle-class perspective. In fact, the self-educated WEAA was proud of his working-class background and affiliations, expressing annoyance at those who assumed otherwise.

There is an instance of this when the usually pacific WEAA was angered by an article on vegetarianism in the *National Reformer,* edited by the secularists Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant. Apparently, there was an implication that WEAA was concerned with keeping wages down. WEAA composed three drafts of his complaint, strongly refuting this, 'It is a novel sensation for me to find myself described as an insidious enemy of the working class,' 'it would be giving a lie to my entire life,' and 'I may at least say that I have never failed to throw whatever influence I possess on the side of that class to which all my associations and sympathies belong.'[35]

WEAA, clubbable member of so many societies and movements, was also a private person, taking his time to establish close friendships. He did not confide easily. The reminiscences of friends reflect this complexity, noting, for example, his ‘large public spirit’, his enthusiasm, warmth and generosity as well as his being a ‘man of very shy and delicate feelings.’[36] Suzie Haddow in New Zealand, commented, ‘My father believes that Axon didn't want to be branded by being known to be illegitimate and this may be why he was so quiet about himself but I was struck by how Sophie's opinions were also very guarded in *We Two*. Maybe it was just a characteristic of their personalities.’[37]

John Higson’s Lost Letter
Fortuitously I found a note recording WEAA’s own version of his adoption.

In January 1879 WEAA applied for the post of Chief Librarian at Birmingham, collected his testimonials together, and had them printed as a pamphlet. A copy of the pamphlet was then bound with others in a volume entitled *Bibliographical Tracts Etc*., owned by The University of Michigan. This was then digitised by Google Books, including the

handwritten note that had been attached by chance to the pamphlet.

The letter, dated 8 November 1870, is from John Higson to the Rev. Canon Raines,

> ‘Many thanks for your very kind and very welcome letter. I had the impression that Mr. Axon was a native of Manchester; & being in that city yesterday I called at the Campfield Library (where he is second librarian) and asked him the question. He said he was born in Honduras Street, Manchester, January 1846 of Yorkshire parents named Whitehead. They died when he was in infancy, and being adopted by a family named Axon as their son; he was sorry to be informed in after-life they were not his father and mother, as he had always been used to call them. They had treated him as a son and called him such; hence he honours and accepts their name. During his 24 years of life he has never been out of Manchester 24 weeks and hence, notwithstanding his Yorkshire blood, considers himself a true Lanky.’[38]

Quite understandably WEAA obscured the truth of his illegitimate birth through this cover story of parents dying in his infancy. At some stage as a child, certainly not in ‘after-life’, he was told about his Yorkshire mother. As described in the next chapters, he corresponded with her and spent holidays with her in Halifax. As a young child he also visited his father, Edward Armytage, now living in Manchester.

Roger Axon commented that his own father Keith and his grandfather Geoffrey never mentioned WEAA's background as such matters would not have been spoken of.

CHAPTER 2

A BELOVED SON OF THE AXON FAMILY

Childhood with the Axons

WEAA was born in the decade known as the 'hungry forties.' As a child he was familiar with poverty, bankruptcy, and the manual labour that families shared to survive. He also experienced the kindness that enabled him against the odds to flourish.

Thomas Axon was master of his own small business, his trade being the slotted lapboards used in cotton bales and as tailoring surfaces. All the children had to help by pasting thin paper onto the boards. Thomas had a sawmill on Mason Street, a throughfare packed with pubs, shops, merchants, and manufacturers in the heart of Ancoats. Ernest described how WEAA was taken from his bed to the sawmill and after a sleep in a warm corner by the boiler would work for hours pasting boards. The sawmill would have been about two or three miles from home, a wearying journey.

Thomas Axon was a temperate man who gave up smoking when he decided it was a bad habit. He was an 'earnest worker in church & Sunday school, being for many years Treasurer & one of the Deacons in Baptist Chapel Wilmott Street, Hulme.'[39] He must have had some part in shaping WEAA's temperance and anti-tobacco principles.

Ernest playfully described WEAA's upbringing in a letter of 1 July 1946. He was replying to a Mr. Micklewright's query about the Mill Yard

Baptists, 'My father was brought up as an orthodox, hard-shell, baptotodip Baptist, and retained his objection to sprinkling when he became a Unitarian, so none of his family by his first wife, was bap. in infancy. He always had an interest in quaint sects, so he may have known the Mill Yard people long before I did.'[40]

Mrs G Linnaeus Banks, aka the poet Isabella Varley, author of *The Manchester Man,*[41] was close to WEAA, even though she had left her beloved city whilst WEAA was still a child. She corresponded with him for years from her London exile. Mrs Banks was perhaps a bit of a Mrs Gummidge as WEAA's griefs often stimulated accounts of her own worse experiences. But she was a sympathetic friend, writing emotionally to WEAA on the loss of his beloved daughter Kitty. In this letter, dated 27 October 1890, she commented, 'You say you have had a hard life. Well, if it had been as hard as I once was told of your infancy, it has been hard indeed.'[42]

Payment

Edward Armytage was legally obliged to pay for his illegitimate child. The bastardy clause, enabling fathers to be pursued for support,

had been abolished in the New Poor Law of 1834. Public outcry followed, spearheaded by Mrs. Trollope's campaigning novel, *Jessie Phillips.*[43] In 1844, a year after this was published, the clause was partially reinstated.

There is only one letter from Edward Armytage to Thomas Axon in AFB. The envelope, dated 1848, is addressed to the Mason Street Saw Mill. The letter is well written and clear as Edward explains a fire has delayed Turner and himself but either he or Turner will bring money, or he will send a postal order. There was a Turner Midgley & Company recorded in 1840 at Victoria Mills, Brighouse, where Edward Armytage was based so perhaps this negotiation was a favour between business friends, Turner acting as middleman in a delicate situation.

Next there are two badly written letters in AFB from a Midgley Turner of Colne Bridge concerning the arrangements. In the first letter, dated February 1849, Turner wished to know the amount due as well as 'what you have received from its Mother.' There is a postscript request 'Send Pertickulers were you ar living.'

As Ernest related, the regular payments from Edward Armytage ceased around 1850 but WEAA remained with the Axons, without doubt a beloved child in the family. They were also kind to his absent mother. In December 1849 one of the sisters sent reassuring news to Lydia, 'Mrs Michel I send you these few lines to let you know that we recavd your letter at Dec 5 th I should like to send you the potrate of our dearley Bloved brother for he getes a beautiful child a noble forehead and pretty dark eyes tow read cheakes and very round

face we remain yours truly so no more at present from your affection friend miss Axon.'[44]

By the Fireside

Ill health prevented WEAA attending a day school but Ernest records that by four years old he had picked up reading and writing from his sisters and from Sunday school. Ernest commented on his father's thirst for learning, his good memory, his talent for languages and how far he was in advance of other boys even though he had no formal training. Although Ernest felt that self-education had been disadvantageous for his father, shutting him out of an academic career, he admitted that it did enable him to follow 'his bent & genius.'[45]

One of WEAA's later fascinations was folklore, and he approached this in a proper scholarly manner. But in his articles, there are also glimpses of the little boy, surrounded by the cheerful voices of his Axon sisters and mother, regaling him with the happy traditions of household rhymes and stories. WEAA's article *The Folk-Lore of Lancashire*[46] still stands as one of the best studies of this newly emerging field, warmed by his understanding of

children's enjoyment of old tales.

In one of his early articles, *The Legend of the Disguised Knight*, WEAA painted, in authorial royal 'we', such childhood delights, 'These words may fitly form the apology for the present imperfect attempt to collect the various versions of a legend which formed one of the pleasures of our childhood, and to which we have listened with rapt attention in the sad and solemn autumn gloamings, or in the long winter evenings.'[47]

Did Thomas Axon, busy with his workshop and role as Deacon and Treasurer, also fill his little son's head with tales? There is just one glimpse that suggests he did. William Andrews in his grisly book *Punishments in the Olden Times* wrote, 'Turning our attention from Lincolnshire to Lancashire, we find traces of numerous examples. Mr. W.E. A. Axon informs us that his father remembers the brank being used at Manchester at the commencement of the present century.'[48]

Hearing Charles Dickens
WEAA wrote at least twice about his treasured childhood memory of hearing Charles Dickens.

In 1910 WEAA gave an address entitled *Books*

and Reading to the St. Paul's Literary and Educational Society, sharing with the audience his reverence for Shakespeare, Shelley, De Quincey - and Dickens, 'Let me quote to you the words I heard more than fifty years ago, from the lips of Charles Dickens, who was engaged in distributing prizes at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester.'[49]

Two years later, WEAA returned to this memory in his *Guardian* article on Charles Dickens and his associations with Manchester, 'On December 4, 1858 he [Charles Dickens] distributed the prizes to the successful candidates of the Mechanics Institute and similar institutions of Lancashire and Cheshire. This was the only occasion on which the present writer heard him. He was an admirable speaker, easy, fluent, self-possessed with the two great qualifications for holding the attention of a great audience – real earnestness and a sense of humour.'[50]

How did the twelve-year-old WEAA manage to be present at the Free Trade Hall ceremony, along with various local Mayors, MPs, officials, members of the Mechanics Institutes, and the band of Dr Mark and his Little Men?

Possibly a relative or family friend such as J P Harrison, secretary of the Mechanics Institute, took him. In any case, the event was not oversubscribed. *The Manchester Courier* for 4 December 1858 commented both on the hall not being over full and on the astonishingly loud din of the 'little fellows' of the band. The *Guardian* of the same date more tactfully mentioned that there were 'not more than 1,000 people in the room.'

WEAA absorbed much from witnessing Dickens charm an audience. He too became a popular speaker, his talks marked by an engaging narrative and humour. According to several accounts, WEAA was blessed with a remarkably rich, deep voice, and he once considered earning a living as a lecturer.

Reading

Ernest noted of the young WEAA that 'reading was his only recreation.'[51] What material was available to him? Strict Baptists like Thomas Axon could be particular about secular literature, but this does not seem to have been the case with the lively Axon family. WEAA's fond mentions of individual books suggest he had plenty of reading available to him as a child. It is likely there were tracts, Sunday School moral tales, school texts, and classics from Shakespeare, John Bunyan, Milton, Walter Scott, and the Lake Poets. WEAA

recalled albums he looked at as a child, and how Tennyson's poems frequently appeared in recitation books 'in the earlier part of his popularity when, I imagine, he was less stringent about copyright. I believe I learned the May Queen by heart from a penny book purchased in Scotland.'[52]
Years later WEAA made a pilgrimage to the grave of Old Humphrey, real name George Mogridge, in Hastings. Old Humphrey's little books were published by the Religious Tract Society, and the 'homely wisdom and cheerful good sense' of this 'chatty writer' delighted WEAA as a child.[53] One correspondent, John L Page, was grateful to WEAA for his kind words on Old Humphrey, 'I observe that you have written very affectionately of Old Humphrey in "Bygone Sussex."[54]'

A curious follow up is that my own visit to the grave, clutching WEAA's *Bygone Sussex*, became a factor in the local historian, Edward G Preston's campaign to reclaim it from ruin.[55]

In an unfinished article on George Meredith's suppressed poems, WEAA scribbled his recollections of a periodical that inspired him,

‘Fifty years ago in the month of July 1859 my youthful enthusiasm for literature and art was deepened and intensified by the appearance of “Once a Week.”’[56] He had never forgotten the George Meredith poem in the second number, the memory still fresh in 1909. The illustrations stimulated WEAA’s with a lasting fondness for art and his own forays at sketching, *Once a Week* had provided a formative experience.

Book Collecting

WEAA became a passionate bibliophile, proud of the rare items he acquired for his personal library. He started young. Manchester was rich in booksellers, street traders, publishers and purveyors of chapbooks and ballads. Ancoats was the home of several of these businesses, including those of Elizabeth and Robert Carr, George Jacques, John Cadman, John Bebbington, and Thomas Pearson. Researchers have identified that many of the broadsides in the Geoffrey R. Axon collection at Chetham’s were printed in Ancoats.[57] Perhaps WEAA bought some as a child. WEAA’s adopted relatives may well have brought back penny items for the precocious child.

Close to Ancoats were the book stalls at Smithfield Market and Shudehill, the latter lasting until redevelopment in the 1960s. The

little boy WEAA haunted these, along with the antiquaries who would become his friends. Often older literature was cheaper to purchase than contemporary publications, one reason why people like WEAA were so well versed in Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, William Cowper, Goldsmith, Shelley, Byron, and Scott.

Libraries

The first Free Library in Manchester opened in 1852 at Campfield, Deansgate, within walking distance for WEAA. From his own account, he was a reader and borrower 'long before' he joined as an employee in 1861.[58] He must have been one of the youngest members.

At some stage, probably amongst the bookstalls of Shudehill, he encountered Richard Wright Procter, an antiquarian man of letters, who became very influential in his life. Procter opened a circulating library in his barber's shop on Long Millgate, and this may have been another source for the young WEAA's reading. Unlike the larger circulating libraries, patronised by the middle classes, little is known of the humble libraries that were provided in some public houses, shops, and factories. As far as I am aware, the only picture of such a shop library is the one WEAA included in his affectionate memoir of Procter.[59]

Little Derwent's Breakfast

Much attention is now paid to working class literacy and reading,

especially in the decades before free libraries and state schools. Researchers frequently find that one book was vividly remembered as the turning point, the key to a whole new world of possibilities. Surprisingly some of the most unassuming books have had enormous impact.

Robert Collyer, a child labourer in a linen factory who later became a Unitarian minister, paid tribute to *The History of Whittington and His Cat*, 'in that first purchase lay the spark of a fire which has not yet gone down to white ashes, the passion which grew with my growth to read all the books in the early years I could lay my hands on, and in this wise prepare me in some fashion for the work I must do in the ministry.'[60]

WEAA remained loyal to the great authors he discovered in his childhood, and he never forgot the enchantment of one innocent little book.

WEAA became a columnist for *News for Bibliophiles* in the American newspaper *The Nation*. In *News for Bibliophiles* 8 May 1913, he reminisced about a beloved childhood book, *Little Derwent's Breakfast*,[61] regretting that copies could no longer be obtained, 'In fifty years I have not seen three copies though it was one of the pleasures of my childhood. Probably the Juveniles for whom it was mainly intended have read it and thumbed the

modest book quite out of existence.'

WEAA, or more likely given his declining health, one of his friends or relations, tracked it down. Later in 1913 it was published in the Broadbent Treasury series, with a foreword from WEAA, explaining how the small book was written by Miss Emily Trevenen for the seven-year-old grandson of the poet Coleridge, Derwent Moultrie.[62]

Miss Emily wrote in simple verses full of bright imagery and the lines skipping along lightly. There are moral messages, but they do not overburden the fairy-tale glimpses of foreign lands. Sugar, salt, milk, a loaf of bread with rich brown crusts, a honeycomb, tea, coffee, and exotic fruits are celebrated as well as bacon, ham, turtles, and tiny trout-fish. Miss Emily preached gently to Derwent on becoming a little gentleman, a good schoolboy and choosing 'the golden way' in life. She denounced robbing nests, sloth, wastefulness, and emphasised the need to understand 'common things' as well as Latin and Greek.

What happened? Derwent Moultrie, perhaps overburdened by expectations, went to the bad, his main achievement being expelled from both Oxford and Cambridge. The family exiled him to Australia 'as punishment for alcoholism, financial recklessness and moral delinquency.' He died there in 1880 'without producing the hoped-for rectitude.' The sorry story is told by Tessa Wooldridge in a three-part blog *On being Ruined by a Fondness for*

Beer.[63]

Little Derwent's Breakfast may have been wasted on Derwent, but it inspired WEAA. From its pages he learnt the delights of simple food, love of birds, appreciation of nature, and the wonder of other lands and stories that lie in ancient texts. WEAA's industrious life must owe something to Miss Emily's guidance. She may well have influenced WEAA's own style as a poet, lightening moral reflection with a sparkle of imagination.

A Close Family

Thomas Axon had four sisters and one brother, James. James' son was a merchant's clerk and his son, named William Edward Axon, was an architect's clerk. This caused me some confusion in searching for WEAA. All these varied family connections continued to feature in WEAA and his children's lives, testifying to his closeness to his adopted clan.

Thomas Axon died on 9 August in 1860, aged 61, and for a time WEAA became the main companion of his adopted mother Elizabeth as her other children were by now married or had moved away. The address given in the 1861 Census is Mallow Street, Hulme, an area of dense housing and industry but closer to WEAA's employment at Campfield Library. In the Census, the enumerator erroneously described WEAA as Elizabeth's grandson.

Elizabeth died in 1873, aged 74 years. Ernest wrote that 'for twenty years after her death he wore her ring, given to him on her deathbed by a stranger in blood whom he loved as a mother & who regarded him as her favourite son.'[64]

CHAPTER 3

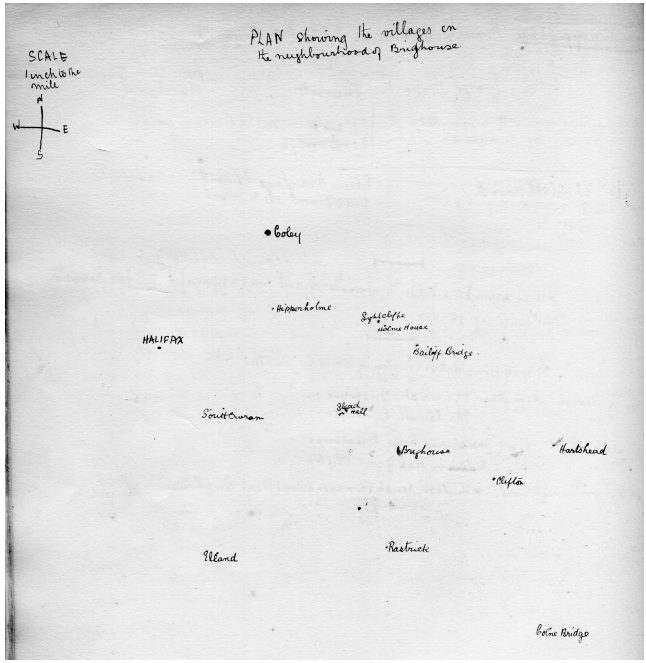
WHITEHEADS AND ARMYTAGES

Across the Pennines

An unexpected story emerges from the correspondence. Although illegitimacy was such a stigma Lydia's family did not reject her, or the little boy left behind in Manchester. WEAA visited his mother in Yorkshire, and letters were exchanged between the families. WEAA and his own children sensibly took the attitude that Lydia was not to be blamed as 'she was a mere child.'[65] WEAA brought his own children to visit. In 1945, Ernest mentioned the family holidays at Highfield Farm, when he was reminiscing about Mr Jast, Chief Librarian at Manchester, 'My first meeting with Mr Jast arose this way. When I was a youth my grandmother had a farm near Halifax, and I often visited her, always calling at the Halifax Library on the way. So I knew all the small staff, and was introduced to the newcomer.' [66]

The trips to Halifax became part of the family history whilst the Armytage and Whitehead ancestry haunted the family psyche. WEAA and Ernest investigated their Yorkshire connections. Both the Whiteheads and the Armytages lived in or around Lightcliffe: a

hand drawn map in AFB suggests WEAA and Ernest thoroughly explored all the associated places.



Hand drawn map of Lightcliffe district

Lightcliffe

In the early nineteenth century Lightcliffe became a desirable village for affluent commuters to Halifax, Brighouse, and Bradford. It is still a pretty place with resplendent stone houses and substantial wooded gardens, redolent of Victorian prosperity. Three Armitage graves, one a splendid chest tomb, together with the Whitehead family grave lie in the peaceful churchyard of St. Matthews, stone chronicles of complex histories.

Lydia

Ernest recorded that Lydia was born on 6 June 1830 at Lightcliffe in Yorkshire. The 1851 Census gives 1829. Her parents were William Whitehead (1800-1864) and Grace Whitehead née Rushworth (1802-1837). William was a small farmer, and Grace worked as a card stitcher. Lydia had an older brother, two older sisters and three sisters who died in childhood.

Two years after WEAA's birth Lydia married a local journeyman blacksmith, Elijah Mitchell, and their daughter, Grace, was born in 1848. There is a photograph of Grace in AFB with a note that Grace was said to 'resemble her mother very much.' If so, Lydia was outstandingly beautiful.

Portrait of Grace daughter
of Elijah and Lydia Mitchell
said to resemble her mother very
much. Photographed by J. Alexander
of Ring's Cross. Halifax

The note gives further details, 'He [Elijah Mitchell] afterwards became a tenant farmer and occupied first Dudley farm, Southowram and afterwards from 1870 to 1887 Highfields Farm, Southowram. E. Mitchell died Jan 1887 and Mrs Mitchell continued the farm which she had managed for several years owing to the bad health of her husband who was paralysed.'

Lydia's daughter, Grace Mitchell, married a William Jervis Fearnley in September 1872 and they lived near Highfield Farm at 202 Beacon Hill Road. Lydia left Highfield Farm in

April 1891 and moved in with them. She was treated for breast cancer in Halifax Infirmary a year later. There is a long letter from Grace to her brother, 'Dr. Axon,' about Lydia's illness. [67] Despite the formality of the address the letter is warm in tone, family news was exchanged, and reference made to WEAA's invitation for Lydia to stay.

Lydia continued to surprise. Unexpectedly, she married again on 13 May 1896. Her second husband was a Samuel Wood of Southowram, a very recent widower. Lydia and Samuel lived at 6 Battinson Street Southowram, near to Dudley Farm but less salubrious. Then 'Lydia died intestate in less than two months and was buried at St. Thomas's Claremount.'[68]

Her personal estate was for the substantial gross value of £593.5.0 (around £72,000 in today's money), and this was awarded by Probate to her husband. Probate gives her date of death as 4 July 1896. From Fearnley's accounts in two letters to WEAA, Samuel Wood certainly sounds a predatory character, not intending to let Grace have a penny of Lydia's money.

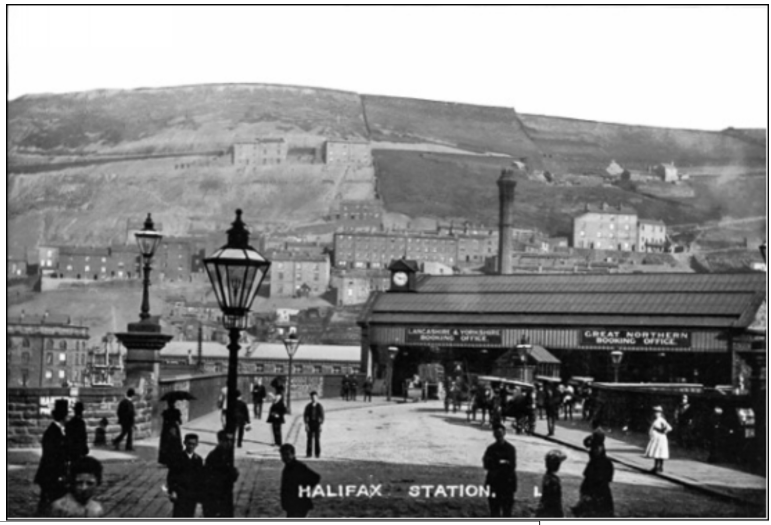
At least Lydia was buried in the same graveyard as Elijah Mitchell. St. Thomas's stands high above Halifax with the church wall overlooking over a vertiginous drop. Only the more splendid memorials survive in situ. Other gravestones are heaped against the walls, but I could not find Lydia's or Elijah's amongst them. Grace herself had seven children and died in 1912. There were no grandchildren to continue the connections with the Axons.

Lydia was indeed a remarkable woman, open in her love for her illegitimate son. This is the summary in Ernest's biographical notes:

> 'She married early to a Yorkshire farmer & blacksmith & lived a laborious & on the whole prosperous life and died of the same disease of which her son died. She kept in touch with Will all her life, & helped him where possible as a boy & he often spent his holidays on her farm. She was a shrewd, kindly & independent woman in her later years. Probably what little WEAA owed to ancestry came from this woman who was 'ruined' when but a child & who lived to earn love & respect of two generations of legitimate & illegitimate descendants.'[69]

Halifax Farms

Dudley Farm is still there, a white house high up on the steep Beacon Hill Road with precipitous fields, now wooded, below. It was visible from Halifax Railway Station when the slopes were bare from pollution.



Halifax Station: Dudley Farm on top left, 1 Beacon Hill Road

WEAA spent holidays at Dudley Farm as a child. In 2017 the owner showed me the old part of the house with the steep steps up to the bedroom. In Lydia and Elijah's time it would have just been a one up and down.

Lydia and Elijah moved to Highfield Farm, Pinnar Lane, in 1870, even higher above Halifax than Dudley Farm. It is a seventeenth century house, now Grade II listed, on an exposed hilltop overlooking fields and farms to the east of Halifax, its bleakness sheltered by ancient trees. Lydia ran the isolated farm and cared for her paralysed husband until his death in 1887. According to AFB in 1882, she trapped the middle finger of her right hand, crushing it so badly it had to be amputated.

Letters

Elijah welcomed WEAA. There is an affectionate letter in AFB, written on his behalf as he struggled with spelling. Lydia's first letters show the same uncertainty, but she became more fluent and literate over the years. Elijah and Lydia's brief remarks evidence a hard life. Nevertheless, they tried to support WEAA until he was earning his own living. There are several mentions of payments in the letters from Lydia as well as in one from Elijah.

The earliest letter from Lydia in AFB is dated 1848. She sent money

to Thomas Axon and asked for news of her ‘dear little boy.’ There is a poignant mention in another undated letter of her father and her brother-in-law John Camm (possibly Carr), expressing their kind love to ‘the little lad.’ Lydia adds in her letter that she is sending WEAA a silk handkerchief, an early birthday present, and is sorry Mrs Axon is ill.

The handful of letters indicates a regular correspondence with exchanges of family news, mentions of aunts, uncles and grandparents, references to holidays, and reproaches from Lydia that her son is not writing more frequently. It is remarkable that Lydia maintained a relationship with her son given the pressures of her unremitting hard work.

Lydia advised WEAA on finding employment, congratulated him on gaining a position, broke the news of his grandfather’s death, and regretted she could not send money when WEAA was short of funds. In her letter of 25 January 1864 Lydia gave WEAA news of his half-sister. WEAA had sent Grace a book which had greatly pleased her, and she was attending night school but not regularly enough to win a prize that year. Lydia sent affectionate wishes for the New Year to the Axon family.

In 1865 Lydia reproached him for not visiting, remembering the ‘many excuses last summer about the cold climate’ and then informed him sadly that her sister, his Aunt Mary, has died, sending her kind love to WEAA from her death bed. One typical letter was written on 21 July 1867 to her ‘dear son and daughter’, WEAA and his wife Jane. Lydia was warm and tender, exchanging family news, updates on health, full of concern and good wishes.

Judging by the correspondence these members of Lydia’s family felt nothing but kindness towards her illegitimate son. They are all mentioned in the letters, admiring the little boy’s achievements, sending good wishes, or arranging money for him. Lydia turned often to John Camm for advice. He was described as ‘Gentleman’ on the family tree and his letters show a well-educated hand.

The Armytage Puzzle

Ernest was determined to trace his Armytage family line. AFB shows he checked an

impressive range of sources, including gravestones, Roll Books for the West Riding, trade directories and business notices in the *London Gazette*. He reproduced pages of notes from a J H Turner, a local who knew Henry Armytage, WEAA's uncle, as a boy. Ernest had a hard task. As well as several unrelated Armytage families, the random variation of Armytage or Armitage spelling, there is a confusing proliferation of the names of George, Joseph, Edward, and William. In 1890 Ernest wrote *to Yorkshire Notes and Queries,*[70] seeking help with the family's Armytage background.

Current online sources produce similar conflicts and puzzles. Fortunately, the Friends of the St Matthew's Churchyard at Lightcliffe have produced meticulous research on the relationships of the Armytage families, giving the details of WEAA's father, grandparents, uncles, aunts, half-siblings, many of whom are buried in the churchyard. WEAA's story is included.[71] Research is ongoing.

The Armytage Line

Some conclusions can be drawn from the confusion. Armytage was an ancient Yorkshire name with prominent members in the military, politics, and even antiquarian matters. There were also humbler kinsmen who achieved wealth as wool-staplers, wiredrawers, and

card makers for the wool trade. This is the lineage of WEAA's father, Edward Armytage. Card making was a thriving industry in the Brighouse area where the Armytages lived. By the end of the eighteenth century the family were wealthy enough to take the significant step of establishing a family seat.

Holme House and the Armytages

In 1804 the prosperous Armytages purchased a substantial house with over seventy acres of land. This was an old farmstead with the unglamorous name of Belly Brigg Farm, probably a name corruption from the nearby Baliffe Bridge. In 1820, the Armytages demolished the old farmhouse and built a magnificent mansion, renamed as Home and later Holme House, on the site. [72]

Belly Brigg Farm/Old Holme House

Joseph Armytage (1778-1849), WEAA's grandfather, sold Holme House on 9 January 1841, to Edward and Henry W. Ripley of Bowling for £500. Holme House had manifested the wealth of the Armytage family,

and the sale signified a slide in their fortunes. In the same year Joseph sold two more properties and land, Green House and Cliff House, to Ann Walker (Anne Lister's partner) for £3150.[73] Green House became the site of the new St. Matthew's Church.[74]

The history of this Armytage line is dotted with bankruptcies, dissolved partnerships and financial resurrections, a not uncommon reflection of fluctuations in the textile trade.

Holme House, the lost domain of the Armytages, is now a substantial Grade II Listed building, beautifully restored. In 2017 the owners kindly showed me the house as well as the eccentric will of George Armytage, Joseph's older brother. He died in 1836, leaving Holme House to his son Samuel and a couple of cases of port to his wife, providing she did not remarry. Samuel may have then sold Holme House to his uncle, Joseph Armytage.

Edward Armytage

In 1798 Joseph married a Mary Armitage from Birmingham. They had four daughters and a son, Cornelius, who died in 1807, aged three. Then came Edward, WEAA's father, born in 1812 at Belly Brigg farm, eight years before its transformation into Holme House. His brother Henry was born in 1815.

According to Ernest's notes, Edward had an adventurous spirit and, unlike the rest of his family, had ventured far away from Lightcliffe. 'In his early life he had been "wild", had enlisted as a private soldier & had served in India where he was wounded in the hip. Consequently, he walked with a limp.' [75] In AFB, there is a similar description that he was

a ‘tall well-built man, clean shaven with a stiff walk’. There is another note in AFB that Edward Armytage was once garrotted and injured. Ernest added ‘H.E.I.C.S’ to Edward’s name on the family tree, denoting the Honourable East India Company Service. In the 1820s, this ‘exceeded a quarter of a million, larger than that of any European power,’[76] and was twice the size of the British Army. Edward returned to the family card making business, becoming a partner in the family firm.

Edward’s Marriages and Legitimate Children
Edward married twice. His first wife, Sarah Morgan, died in 1843 at the age of thirty-one, leaving four children, Edward, Cornelius, Frederick John, and Annie. There are notes in AFB that Edward was delicate, Cornelius a very nice boy who ran away to sea and was never heard of again and that Frederick John, also described as delicate, became proprietor of an eating house on Turner Street, Manchester, and died in 1911. There is more information from the Friends of St Matthew’s Churchyard. Edward may have died in 1840, Cornelius joined the Merchant Navy in 1854, returned to Liverpool a year later after a voyage, and then there is no more of his story. Annie was born and died in 1841.

Lydia Whitehead was employed by the family as a nursemaid. Lydia’s remarks on Sarah Morgan were recorded in a note in AFB, ‘Mrs Mitchell, who was nurse to E Armytage’s sons Cornelius & Fredk John, says that Mrs. A. was a Welsh lady named Morgan. She drank herself to death (gin).’

There is no record whether WEAA ever met his half-brothers, Cornelius, and Frederick.
Edward married Sarah’s sister Elizabeth on 5 June 1845 at St. Mary’s Church, St. Pancras, London. The Rev Thomas James Judkin,

well known for composing hymns, conducted the ceremony. In AFB, Elizabeth was listed as 'daughter of the late Mr. John Morgan of Santley Hall, near Wrexham.'
The reason for the marriage taking place so far away was that it was illegal. Marriage between a man and his deceased wife's sister had been explicitly forbidden by a bill of 1835, provoking decades of controversy until it was repealed in 1907. Such couples usually left the country to get married so presumably London was Edward's risky equivalent. His second wife had no children.

Lydia was already pregnant at the time of his second marriage. At some stage Edward took Lydia to Manchester for the birth. There is a note in AFB that Edward left Manchester around 1846 or 1847.

Bankruptcy

A year after Joseph's death the firm Joseph Armytage & Sons became bankrupt. Edward appeared at the Court of Bankruptcy Leeds in November 1850. Following a petition, the bankruptcy was suspended and annulled in February 1851. Once he was struggling to avoid bankruptcy and rebuild his business, Edward stopped any financial support for his son. As Ernest wrote, 'After 1850 Edward Armytage seems to have done nothing for WEAA.'[77]

Around 1856, Edward set up as a card maker and cotton spinner in Manchester but never really prospered. According to Ernest's extract from the 'roll of Citizens of Manchester,' his residence was 57 Mulberry Street in Hulme, a dense industrial area.
Ironically both birth father and adoptive father were neighbours in the heart of industrial Ancoats. Edward Armytage's card making business was at Beehive Mills on Jersey Street, close to Mason Street where Thomas Axon had his sawmill. Ernest found a last mention of the firm in 1869. Beehive Mill still stands, an important building in architectural history for its prefabrication, iron

framework construction, and fireproofing.

Contact with Edward Armytage

It is a revelation to discover from Ernest's notes that WEAA was in contact with his natural father. Presumably WEAA's visits took place once his father had returned to Manchester around 1856.This is what Ernest recorded, 'He was fond of reading & his son thought him an intelligent man. During his residence in Manchester WEAA often visited him, not from any filial feeling, it must be conferred, but because his niece Fanny was kind to her uncle's son.'[78]

Traces of Edward Armytage

There is another twist to the story as recorded on RootsChat: 'Family stories tell how, after Edward's business failed and he fell on hard times, Lydia returned and nursed him on his deathbed.'[79] Such a legend must be from the Yorkshire side as the Axons made no mention of this. It is much more likely that this is a misinterpretation of her long years of nursing Elijah Mitchell.

Neither WEAA nor Ernest, both experienced genealogists, could discover what happened to Edward Armytage. Ernest refers to unsuccessfully searching the General Register

Office for the years 1862 to 1876 and concluded ‘he died so obscurely that his son never knew when or where’.[80]

Is it possible he died in Lancaster County Asylum? Manchester Council paid for many mentally ill patients to be cared for in asylums outside the city. Lancaster Asylum had a good reputation, reformed in the 1840s by the humane regime of Mrs Gaskell’s beloved brother-in-law, Doctor Samuel Gaskell. I found a death certificate in 1867 for an Edward Armitage, cotton spinner of Chorlton, recording that he died in Lancaster County Asylum of brain disease and paralysis. This usually denoted syphilis. His birth date was given as 1822, a ten-year discrepancy as Edward was born in 1812 but allowing for mistakes in records that is not conclusive. The rest could fit.

AFB also has a written note that Edward was ‘supposed to have died circa 1866-70 in the Hospital at Withington.’ This was both a hospital for the poor and a workhouse. The records for inmates have survived but no Edward Armytage is amongst them. The mystery remains.

Pseudonyms
Edward Armytage himself may disappear from record, but his name developed a life of its own. WEAA chose Armytage as the middle name for five of his children. WEAA, his daughter Sophie, and Ernest all variously used Armytage as a house name. In 1905 Ernest called his house in Bredbury, Lightcliffe, another gesture to his Yorkshire ancestry.

WEAA’s plays on the Armytage name and the name of Lydia’s farm, Dudley, were familiar to his friends though they may not have known the basis for the choice. In 1865 and 1866, he and other young men, members of the Manchester Crichton Club, produced *The Crichton Annual*. Spoof pieces by WEAA

included poems by and references to a ‘F. D’A ’ and a ‘Fred D’Armytage’. WEAA adopted the name Edward Armytage as his pseudonym in his tale of disreputable lives and consequences, *The Gambler’s Daughter or, John Dudley’s Secret,* first published as a serial in the *Co-operative News* in 1865 and as a book twenty years later.[81]

He united references to his father’s name and his mother’s farm in his pseudonyms, ‘Dudley Armytage’, ‘Dudley Armytage’ or ‘D.A.’. Use of this pseudonym runs through all his writings almost as a second persona. In 1883, as Dudley Armytage, Esq., he authored *How to Succeed in the World: a Manual for Young Men*.[82] Unusually, WEAA did not mention this work in his AP correspondence and there are no references in AFB or elsewhere. I only discovered its existence through a copy being boxed up with other Axon items at MCLA. However, it was advertised, price sixpence, with a list of its chapters ‘on Industry, Honesty, Self-Education, Method, Promptitude, Punctuality, Trifles, Companions and Leisure, Marriage, and Men who have Succeeded.’[83] What would Edward Armytage have made of it all?

Following up hints in AP, I discovered some more stories by Dudley Armitage in the *Manchester Christmas Annual* for 1883 and 1884. The first is a dreadful melodrama, *Maria the Model*, a tale of a pantomime villain rake. The second is a much pleasanter tale based on an Italian legend, *The Lady's Bridge at Toledo*. Both are given as written by Dudley Armytage but the first citation also includes in brackets (Mr. E. A. Axon). Presumably the 'W' is omitted by accident. The *Manchester Christmas Annual* seems an amateur affair, with the writers and artists giving their contributions freely in the genial goodwill of the season.[84]

Fellow members of the Manchester Literary Club (MLC) casually referenced his persona in the club's journal. One such example is, 'but not least, the story of *The Master Thief*, so pleasantly told by Dudley Armytage (W.E.A.Axon), in Ab-o"th"-Yate's Christmas Annual, 1880.'[85]

There was never any doubt that Dudley Army(i)tage was WEAA. Always fascinated by pseudonyms and anonymous works, WEAA contributed a list to *N&Q* of a hundred names to supplement *Olphar Hamst's Handbook of*

Fictitious Names. Amongst them he slipped in his own article, '*Shakespeare's House*. [Signed] Dudley Armytage [William E.A. Axon] Glasgow, 1868, Single leaf'.[86] His pervasive use of the name has been picked up in academic texts, for example his name is given by Margaret Beetham in *Healthy Reading; the periodical press in late Victorian Manchester* as W.E.A.Axon (Dudley Armitage) 1846-1913.[87]

WEAA used the pseudonym again for his contributions to his friend Joseph Alley's magazine, *Pallas*, published in 1883. The JRL copy of this rare and short-lived journal once belonged to WEAA. He annotated all the pseudonyms used in it, including his own, with the real names.[88]

Another family reference could well account for the pseudonym 'Grandfather Whitehead' in the 1871 *The Band of Hope Treasury*, the journal of the Temperance Society. There are likely to be other unnamed items from WEAA in this same issue. They are hard to identify as *The Band of Hope Treasury* expressed its sentiments in a standard, uniform style.

There were at least four editions of WEAA's *An Axon Treasury Verses Original and Translated*

and they sold in their thousands.[89] His grandson Geoffrey published another selection as a second series in 1914.[90] In his introduction Geoffrey mentioned that his grandfather also published many verses ‘anonymously, many only initialled, and others under pennames as Goldpen, Manceinion.’

These are understandable inventions. Perhaps Goldpen referenced WEAA’s mentor Andrea Crestadoro, (Crest of Gold). Manceinion, the Celtic word for Manchester, was the choice for his honorific name as a Welsh Bard. But what was WEAA thinking of as he penned a tale of a disreputable young man under the authorship of ‘Edward Armytage’, or wrote the ‘Dudley Armytage’ treatise on success in life?

WEAA’s sense of humour was often remarked upon. Playful pseudonyms must have been one way of dealing with his origins. Certainly, the matter of names haunted the boy who called himself WEAA but could only legitimately claim, ‘William.’ Later in life, as a genealogist, he had to deal with painful queries and assumptions about his lineage. Admirably, WEAA accorded his birth mother love and respect, and his father some sort of wry tribute. His children followed his lead.

CHAPTER 4

HE BEGAN LIFE AS A BOY IN THE MANCHESTER REFERENCE LIBRARY

Family Advice

It was time for WEAA to start earning. In 1860 and 1861 there was some debate across the Pennines on what direction he should take. Thomas Axon wanted him to learn a trade. Lydia was unsure, 'she cannot tell what to think is best,' wondered whether to leave it to Thomas but then consulted John Camm, her respected brother-in-law. When Thomas Axon died on 9 August 1860, it was even more urgent for WEAA to bring in a wage.

John wrote directly to WEAA. Wisely, he suggested that WEAA should be looking at something better than a manual trade. As there were advertisements every day for boys of his age, WEAA should aim at a position that involved writing. John added perceptively, 'I think you seem to me to have to get a living by your pen.'

Auction House

WEAA took his Uncle John's advice to heart. Ernest recorded that WEAA's first job was with an auctioneer's office. WEAA would have been a lowly porter, clerk, or office boy but this still represented a step up from manual labour. Successful auction clerks might rise into recording sale items with a profitable side-line of selling the handwritten catalogues. But WEAA only stayed a few months, unsurprisingly given the anecdote in Ernest's account, 'The only reading there was an act of

parliament & WEAA read it so often he got it almost off by heart & in after years could recite whole sections. More congenial work came to him in 1861…'[91]

Later WEAA made good copy from this brief experience in his article *An Auction Room*.[92]

The Perfect Niche

WEAA found the perfect niche with the Manchester Free Libraries in 1861. A journalist wrote, 'He began life as a boy in the Manchester Reference Library,'[93] an oddly phrased yet essentially true statement. WEAA was not actually born amongst books but when the child reader became boy assistant, first in the Campfield Lending Library and then the Reference Library, his life as a scholar and writer truly began.

Looking Back, Looking Forward

Born near the mid-century, WEAA was conscious that he was seeing history being made. As he observed, 'the changes in the condition of the County Palatine have been so rapid that many things have become obsolete in the lifetime of the existing generation.' WEAA was impelled to capture 'bygone customs, forgotten worthies, outworn superstitions, historical episodes and

travellers' tales,'[94] and this formed much of his published output. But like Janus, he looked both forward and back. He was driven to re-imagine Old Manchester as it turned to rubble under the new streets, warehouses, factories, and housing. But he equally encouraged and applauded the modern city with its art galleries, museums, libraries, hospitals, parks, and schools. As a founder or early member of several societies, he influenced their development whilst later being the popular choice to chronicle their histories. WEAA looked at future directions as well as past achievements. His account of the Vegetarian Society (VS), for example, was entitled, *Fifty Years of the Vegetarian Society: Looking Backward and Looking Forward*.[95]

The free library movement is where this pattern first emerges. As a boy, WEAA knew some of the original pioneers, became one of the founders of the Library Association (LA), a campaigner on several fronts, and, by the end of the century, was a mentor to the new generation of young librarians. And, of course, he lectured and wrote on libraries and librarianship. As a library historian WEAA commemorated the pioneers but he also stimulated debate with innovative proposals on such matters as national bibliographies, legal deposit, the importance of report literature, and the need to equip readers with methods to distinguish good and useful sources.

Manchester Free Libraries

Manchester and the Free Library movement are indivisible. John Potter, Manchester's first

Mayor, and the Salford MP Joseph Brotherton were main drivers of the 1850 Library Act, and Manchester the first authority to adopt it. Manchester also claims to be the first to open a library under the Act although strictly speaking this achievement belongs to Winchester. Its tiny library of 300 books was celebrated with 'the old Winchester bushel' of strong beer on 10 November 1851, almost a year ahead of Manchester.'[96]

Campfield: Manchester Free Library

Campfield: Manchester Free Library from *Views and Memoranda of Public Libraries* by Alfred Cotgreave

By the time of the grand opening on 2 September 1852, the Library Committee had appointed the eminent librarian Edward Edwards as Chief, redeveloped the old Owenite Hall of Science at Campfield, hired staff, devised rules, and started to wrestle with library organisation. James Crossley, founder of the Chetham Society,

assisted Edwards in the fraught business of the first collections. Thomas Baker, Chair of the Library Committee from 1864 to his death in 1886, was knighted in 1883 for his civic services: he was a forceful figure during WEAA's library career.

WEAA wrote about Joseph Brotherton, became friends with James Crossley, co-operated with Thomas Baker on library and civic matters, and corresponded with Edward Edwards.

Three Chief Librarians

Despite his achievements at Campfield, Edward Edwards was forced to resign in 1858. His difficult personality created conflicts that the Library Committee would not tolerate.

The second Chief Librarian, Robert W Smiles, brother of Samuel Smiles of *Self-Help* fame, was a stopgap. He left in 1863 when he could no longer endure the dictatorial Library Committee. However, he approved of his bookish and conscientious boy assistant, WEAA, and they later corresponded.

The lack of a printed reference catalogue was an ongoing nightmare with many attempted starts and failures. The Committee finally advertised for help. The indexer and bibliographer Andrea Crestadoro was selected from a field of twenty-nine candidates and employed as a contractor from 1862-1864. Within two years the whole problem was resolved.

Crestadoro delivered on time and well within budget, a massive catalogue, encompassing around 30,000 works, structured by his new system, keyword in context indexing. Crestadoro's *Index Catalogue*[97] proved popular with staff and readers, becoming the model for other Free Libraries until the early

twentieth century, a prestigious achievement for Manchester.

When Smiles resigned the Committee looked no further for his replacement and Crestadoro was appointed Chief Librarian, a position he fulfilled until his death in 1879. Crestadoro's advent was to make a critical difference to the young WEAA.

Appointment as Library Assistant

But to return to WEAA's first days at Campfield. Amongst the library 'in' letters for March/April 1861 there is a note that there have been a 'bunch of applicants' in response to an advertisement for boy assistants. One applicant was William Axon of 40 Mallow Street, Rutland Street, Hulme.[98] He was appointed on a month's trial, starting 1 March 1861, allocated a salary of five shillings per week and a post at Campfield Lending Library. He and a Thomas O'Malley replaced two boys, fired for misconduct.

Ernest noted that WEAA was engaged by Joseph Radford, the Librarian of Campfield Lending Library, meaning that Radford recommended him to Chief Librarian Smiles who, in turn, recommended him to the Committee who then finalised the decision. Dates and subsequent pay levels are detailed in AFB.

WEAA was fortunate to be engaged as his frailty and lack of height would have counted against him. Boy assistants of choice were physically vigorous, capable of hard work, able to contend with high ladders and heavy lifting as well as aggravated customers. The criteria were strength and stature rather than bookishness. The problem was that such boys soon left for better pay and conditions in the warehouses, many of them palatial buildings.

WEAA was lucky that Joseph Radford interviewed him as he was a devoted librarian who would value WEAA's intelligence and love of reading. Radford was equally fortunate. Years later WEAA came to his rescue as related in Chapter 28.

Work Conditions

Even the tough boys struggled with their duties as library assistants. A major problem, not resolved until the early twentieth century, was that the books were not on open shelves but in closed access. Going up and down the high ladders to retrieve books was exhausting for the assistants, especially under the pressure of the constant demands. Worst of all, the boys were expected to deal with the monstrous and filthy furnaces that heated the buildings.

The continual recruitment, training, and loss of boy assistants was from the first a management nightmare. In 1871 Crestadoro presented the Library Committee with a damning report on the whole staffing crisis, highlighting the conditions the assistants endured, citing the poor pay, the lack of holidays, and the dreadful fumes. Ernest similarly described what WEAA encountered as a boy assistant:

> 'The hours of work at the Library were many, the assistants worked all the time the place was open, eleven hours a day for six days each week, the only holiday being a half holiday which they were entitled to regularly but only when the Chief Librarian, Mr R.W. Smiles happened to be in a good temper, which tradition says was not often. The pay was small & the prospects poor, for the profession of librarian was then a young one.'[99]

The Lancashire Cotton Famine

To compound the hardships of being a boy

assistant, WEAA had joined the Free Libraries during a particularly difficult period. As he described it some years later, 'The "Cotton Famine" was a time to try men's souls.' [100] The Cotton Famine, the consequence of the American Civil War, blighted thousands of Lancashire lives between 1861 and 1865. Destitution was arguably greatest in the mill towns, but Manchester suffered terribly too. By 1862, half a million people in Lancashire were on relief.

Manchester librarians kept meticulous statistics and were well-aware that numbers increased in hard times. The surge of readers during the Cotton Famine could hardly be accommodated, and the rooms were intolerably overcrowded. People crammed themselves in rows upon the warming pipes. One of the librarians, WEAA's friend, William Robert Credland, later wrote, 'Instead of sinking into a condition of utter despair under the cruelty of their sufferings, thousands of the factory hands during the cotton famine passed their days in the reading rooms of the Free Libraries, and by the reading of books or papers diverted their attention for a time from their distress, or possibly were directed to

means of alleviating it.'[101]

Drafting his application for the post of Chief Librarian of Birmingham in 1879, WEAA still remembered the overcrowding, 'As an assistant I became acquainted with the work of the Lending Library during the busy period of the Cotton Famine.'[102]

Early Ambition
Soon after their appointment as boy assistants, WEAA, Thomas O'Malley and Robert Ferguson from the Rochdale Branch, applied for a post at Chetham's Library. The exact date is unknown, but it was before Smiles' departure in 1863.

Chetham's Library is one of the world's greatest historical libraries. Founded in 1653, its rich collections are set in the fantastic surroundings of a fifteenth century baronial hall, remodelled by Tudors and Jacobeans. This is both a living and ancient library, in unchanging use over the centuries. Stepping into the dark timbered holds of Chetham's feels like embarking onto an Elizabethan sailing ship. As WEAA noted the building itself is 'one of the very few relics left of Old Manchester.'[103]

WEAA described Chetham's as 'an abiding place for the literary riches of past ages. Chetham's was the first library in Europe to

open its doors freely to all comers without distinction of rank or creed.'[104] However, Chetham's did not lend items and was closed in the evening and on Saturdays. WEAA and others pointed out that this effectively debarred working people.

Smiles commented on the candidates as follows:

> 'They are all under 20 years of age. Ferguson is tractable, industrious, attentive youth, and of fully average culture and intelligence. O'Malley is superior to the others in physique, and is an active intelligent youth. Axon knows more of books and bibliography than either of the others. If the committee for selection would favour the youths by putting them upon the "short list" I venture to think that they would not have much difficulty in arriving at a conclusion as to their respective merits.[105]

Presumably he was hinting that WEAA was the outstanding candidate.

WEAA also applied unsuccessfully for the post of librarian at the Mechanics Institute in 1865 and at the Bolton Free Library in 1866.

Progress as an Assistant

WEAA progressed steadily in his first years as an assistant in the Lending Library. On 22 April 1861, within a few weeks of finishing

probation, WEAA did not hesitate to remind the Library Committee of the 'terms of our agreement'[106] and his salary was raised to six shillings per week, the usual rate after the initial trial. Over the next two years his salary rose to eight shillings per week, and the Minutes of 18 August 1863 note an increase to twelve shillings.

Staff had to sign in and WEAA was customarily on the early side of his expected start of 9.30. His exact hours for 1861 are known as the Chief Library Timetable for that year has survived. WEAA worked the standard three shifts, 9.30 to 11.45, 1 to 4.30 and then 5.30 to 9.00. It was a gruelling day and as one of WEAA's correspondents commented, 'a horrid walk' from Campfield.[107] There is much in MCLA on the difficulties of the breaks, and sometimes assistants, especially the girls who were employed from 1871 onwards, were moved to branches nearer their homes.

Addresses were updated in the timetable book. WEAA's addresses changed from 40 Mallow Street to 10 Francis Terrace, Salford, and then again to 15 St Simon Street, Strangeways. All were within walking distance of Campfield. The moves to the other side of the city suggest that he was no longer living with his adopted mother: perhaps she was now with one of her three daughters or her son. It

would have been hard on his salary to support himself in lodgings. There are many letters from the boy assistants detailing the difficulties of surviving on such low wages. On 1 September 1862, WEAA applied for an advance, pleading 'it becomes a matter of importance that I should support myself, and my inability to do so with my present salary had necessitated the present application.'

Reading

Despite the long hours, restricted holidays, and poor environment, WEAA blossomed. As Ernest described, 'But the work was congenial and there really were many opportunities of reading, which WEAA availed himself of. Even when they were busy there was still the time before 9am and after 9pm which the young student could use for self-improvement if he was not too sleepy.'[108]

WEAA's detailed study of Manchester libraries, published in 1877,[109] shows that he explored every library within walking distance and managed to get access to private collections. He was well known to porters and library staff at the magnificent establishments of the Portico, Athenaeum, and at the more modest Overseers' Library. In his chapter on the subscription library, The Portico, he wrote gratefully that researchers who were not members were rarely turned away. Ernest wondered why his father did not, like several

of his friends, study at Owens College, later Manchester University, ‘He was no poorer than some of those in your list who went there in the evenings, and quite up to the standard, and several of them were men with whom he had a life-long friendship, the two Phillips’, Sutton and others.’[110]. In his last days, WEAA spoke of the constraints on his time but expressed his enduring gratitude for access to Owens library.

WEAA prioritised reading before eating, spending his meal breaks with books.

Andrea Crestadoro

Only known image of Crestadoro: from *Momus,* 20 March 1879

The link between Crestadoro and WEAA is still remembered in New Zealand. Suzie Haddow wrote that her father, George Bentley Haddow, WEAA's great grandson, 'was aware that Crestadoro had been a mentor for WEAA and that things might have gone quite differently for him if they hadn't met.'[111] Crestadoro expanded WEAA's horizons.

Crestadoro was a quiet man with an extraordinary background. Born in Genoa in 1808, he graduated at the age of thirty-four in Natural Philosophy at the University of Turin. He journeyed to England in 1849, accompanying a strange machine, the Impulsoria, and its inventor Clemente Masserano. When Masserano returned to Italy, Crestadoro 'finding the country to his liking'[112] remained. He failed as an inventor, but his break came when he was employed by the publisher Sampson Low and transforming what was virtually a national bibliography, the *British Catalogue of Books,*[113] with his new method of rotated keyword indexing. In 1858 he had written a visionary book, T*he Art of Making Catalogues*.[114]

Altogether, Manchester was rightly proud of its slightly mysterious third Chief Librarian. The staff were fond of their courteous Chief

and WEAA benefited from his encouragement. Several of WEAA's papers owe their inspiration to Crestadoro.

WEAA joins Crestadoro's Staff
Unlike the other candidates for the Reference Library catalogue contract, Crestadoro had declared he would not need assistants (a factor greatly in his favour). Crestadoro kept his word but WEAA, fascinated by catalogues, must have sneaked in from the Lending Library to watch and learn. In later years WEAA always praised Crestadoro's catalogue as well as championing Crestadoro's ideas on the British Museum Library (BML) catalogue, and universal bibliography.

As the newly appointed Chief Librarian Crestadoro gave his first report to the Campfield Library Sub Committee on 21 June 1864. He highlighted the need to strengthen the staff, especially for such tasks as creating manuscript copies of pressmarks. He planned to achieve this 'by the addition of a new competent hand, and by the exchange of one of the present hands with some other better adapted to the new requirements of the library.'[115] The Sub Committee approved the addition and, on the very same day, Crestadoro transferred the talented WEAA to the Reference Library, coming under his wing as second senior assistant. WEAA was now in a perfect environment.

The reference collection enabled WEAA to explore not just the contents of the books,

journals, pamphlets, and tracts, but the bibliographic, printing, and book trade aspects. His phenomenal memory, his intelligent linking of all sorts of information founded his reputation ‘as a kind of walking encyclopaedia, there being but few subjects of everyday conversation upon which he could not discourse both learnedly and well.’ [116]

This comment is significant. Famed as he became for his knowledge, WEAA’s key talent was his ability to share the excitement of learning with others, ‘His power of assimilation of knowledge and facility in imparting it was extraordinary, whilst his industry and felicity in writing were equally marvellous.’[117]

Salary and Promotion

WEAA’s salary increased steadily under Crestadoro. It was customary for library staff to make a case for ‘advances’ as wage rises were termed. There was an expected progression in rank and salary with the years of service, usually taking a few attempts at each stage.

Unusually no refusals were recorded for Axon’s requested advances though there are a couple of instances where requests were deferred for a few months. The importance of these increases in what was a low paid profession is evidenced by the minute detail recorded in AFB. Every increase is there, usually no more than one or two additional shillings per week, but each one meant a step away from worry.

WEAA was earning five shillings per week in February 1861 and twenty-five shillings a week in 1867. Ernest gave 1866 for WEAA's critical promotion to Sub Librarian[118] and Walmsley 1867[119] but these discrepancies may simply reflect an informal promotion waiting to be ratified officially. WEAA was certainly recognised and referred to as the deputy or Sub Librarian before the official promotion in 1868. The 1870 list of proposed increases has an unusual note against WEAA's name of 'most deserving.'[120]

Reference Library Duties

As Crestadoro's senior assistant and then deputy, WEAA dealt with everything from staff, collections, reports, and readers through to building problems. Heating, lighting, ventilation as well as retrieval from the high shelves were the daily problems that confronted the librarians.

His increasing responsibilities were recognised. Smiles, writing to Crestadoro from London in March 1869, referred to WEAA as 'your accomplished lieutenant.'[121]

WEAA's first task under Crestadoro was description of the pressmarks. His request for an increase of salary in 1866 gives a full picture of his daily tasks:

> 'I have been in the library service five years, during which time I have endeavoured to acquire such a knowledge of books as might enable me to assist the researches and lessen the labour of student and inquirer frequenting the institution. I may perhaps be allowed to state that the Reference Library binding, including the preparation of the lists is under my

care, that the compilation of the Press Catalogue was instructed to me, the greater proportion being written by myself, and the remainder under my direction and that I have also been employed (under the immediate supervision of the Chief Librarian) in writing out the subject-matter Index of the Supplemental Catalogue of the Reference Library.

In addition to the above duties I have the general superintendence of the Issue Desk and have to see that the wishes of visitors receive prompt and careful attention. I am now in my 22nd year, and am receiving 18/- per week.'[122]

WEAA was, in fact, twenty years old. This mistake is probably from copying a standard letter and adding personal bits in the middle. A letter in the same month from another colleague, Alexander Houghton Mills, has the same information on age and salary. Obviously, colleagues helped each other frame the requests and there are even some jointly signed letters.

Learning Languages

Manchester's position in the mercantile world meant ambitious young men and women were keen to acquire languages. WEAA's friend Louis Charles Casartelli, later Bishop of Salford, urged learning oriental languages for trade and commerce. The Free Libraries needed to provide supporting literature. As well as these students, there were long established foreign communities, especially German residents, to cater for.

Campfield was therefore rich in foreign language material, and WEAA was determined the content of these collections should not remain inaccessible to him. He eventually developed a reading knowledge of around twenty languages from Chinese to Romani and became fluent in French, German, Italian and Spanish.
With these skills he could now tackle specialist cataloguing, deal with related reference queries, help in selection of foreign language materials as well as extending his own study of related literatures.

He used tuition as well as the Campfield resources. WEAA was an early riser. William Canning, a lifelong temperance and vegetarian friend, and later a *Guardian* colleague, noted that, 'It was only by degrees that one learned and appreciated the unconquerable thirst for knowledge that made him as a youth study Chinese in order to catalogue the books in the free library or send him out before six o'clock, when his hours at the library were from 9 o'clock to 9 at night, to study his lessons at Birch Fields before his day's work began.'[123] Birch Fields is in Rusholme, a long walk for WEAA from any of his recorded addresses as a bachelor.

WEAA's natural talent for languages enhanced his value as a librarian and later as a journalist, as well as extending the range of his own writing. Ernest lamented he did not inherit his father's linguistic abilities.

As Soaring to the Seagull

WEAA either was calm by nature or cultivated calm. Very occasionally he admitted his own exhausted struggles, and he understood only too well the experiences of colleagues broken by overwork. But the pursuit of knowledge was so natural to him that all else fell away: that, at least, is how Canning saw him, 'I have never known a man like Axon who carried so

much knowledge so easily, so modestly, and with such quiet certitude of his facts. The activity of other men's knowledge has seemed to jolt and grind along the ground and leave some consciousness of the friction and the effort, while his seemed to advance without art or effort and to belong as naturally to him as soaring to the sea gull.'[124]

Professional Skills

WEAA learnt librarianship from Crestadoro, not only cataloguing but also the practical running of a complex organisation. He seized every opportunity as Crestadoro's protégé, 'In this post he worked with zeal and ability, and gathered that practical acquaintance with the management of public libraries which has made him one of the chief among living authorities on the subject.'[125] James Stanley Jevons, Professor of Political Economy at University College London, admired Crestadoro. He emphasized in a testimonial for WEAA how fortunate he was to be: 'trained to library management by so accomplished a Librarian and Catalogue Compiler.'[126]

Crestadoro benefitted from his relationship with WEAA, finding not only a friend but 'a valuable and enthusiastic assistant in making

known the character and scope of the books the libraries contained.' [127] Ernest was honest about where his father's inclinations lay, 'He was never much interested in the administrative part of his duties but his love of books and his even then great knowledge of them stood him in good stead and uses of the library were under constant obligations to him.'[128]

Beyond the Call of Duty

Like Crestadoro, WEAA was expert in cataloguing, producing supplements to the *Index Catalogue* and print catalogues for the branches. By his own account he also took on unpaid work. In a letter to the Library Committee, 26 June 1867, he requested an increase in salary, describing the time he has given to the Hulme Branch catalogue:

> 'Being anxious to secure the fulfilment of the wishes of the Committee for a useful and practical Catalogue of the Hulme Branch, I undertook myself in preparation upon an improved and successful plan, devoting to it my whole time and leisure both before and after the office hours for upwards of six months.'

In a follow up request WEAA pointed out that he has taken on greater responsibility, 'During the recent absence of the Chief Librarian I was in general charge as his deputy' as well as

having ‘a considerable share in the compilation of the title slips which form the basis of the Hulme and Chorlton Catalogues.’[129] Even a sick note he sent in was written on the back of a specification for a printed catalogue. It looks as if he took work home. The scrap also indicated his desperate wish to return ‘My illness has left me so very weak that I have not yet ventured out of doors at all. I am very anxious to get back to my work but am afraid…’[130]

There was discretionary support for staff in their illness: valued staff would continue to have their salary paid even in long absences. There was no pressure on WEAA, but he struggled with fragile health, dreaded the onset of winter, and hated enforced absences.

CHAPTER 5

A RASH STEP: COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Adventurous Spirit

WEAA shocked his friends by his early marriage in 1866, and then eight years later by resigning from Manchester Free Libraries. Edward Armytage's son had adventure in his veins. Others noticed WEAA's equanimity. They remarked on his 'unruffled calm',[131] his quiet manner, and his measured pace. As one friend wrote, 'He had the tolerance, the catholicity, the geniality, and the peacefulness that comes to the cloistered student.'[132]

Whatever his innate temperament or stoic philosophy, WEAA had taught himself to cope with stress. His draft letters in AP are revealing. The annoyed comments, gradually moderated with crossings out or a blue pen, suggest WEAA deliberately cultivated this calm control whatever anger surged beneath.

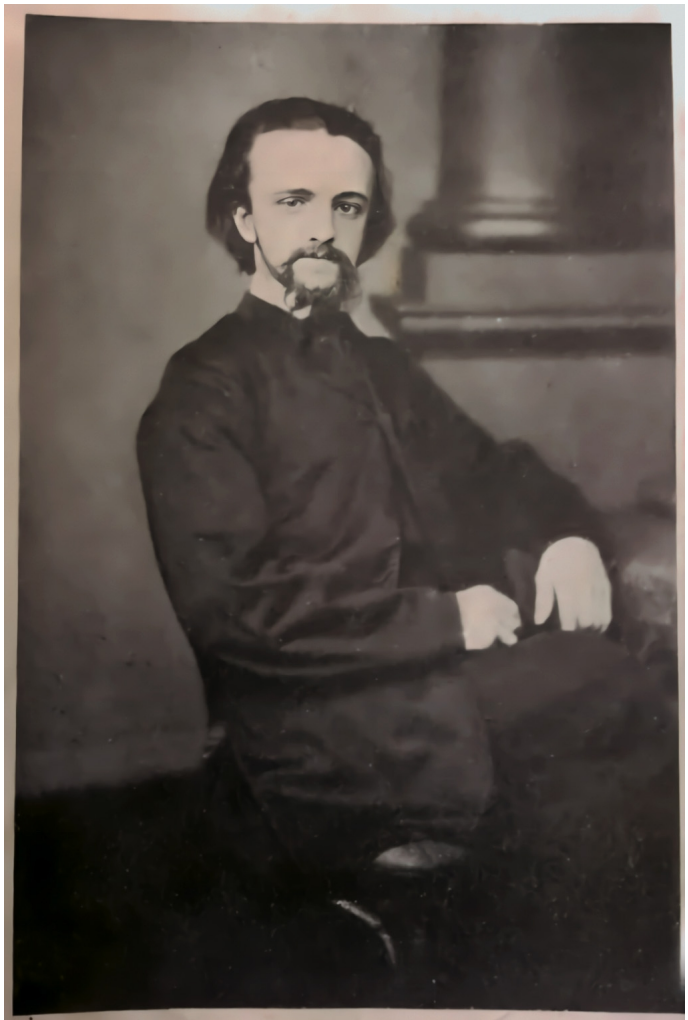
Another factor was that WEAA possessed the invaluable trait of humour, a shield against dark worries. There is plenty of direct evidence of this lightness of spirit in his letters and in his early published writings, particularly the sketches in The Crichton Club magazines. WEAA enjoyed laughing at his own and friends' literary ambitions with neat jokes and pastiches. Marriage brought him the fun of another lively family.

An Attractive Bachelor

The beautiful child with his 'pretty dark eyes'[133] and noble forehead grew into a

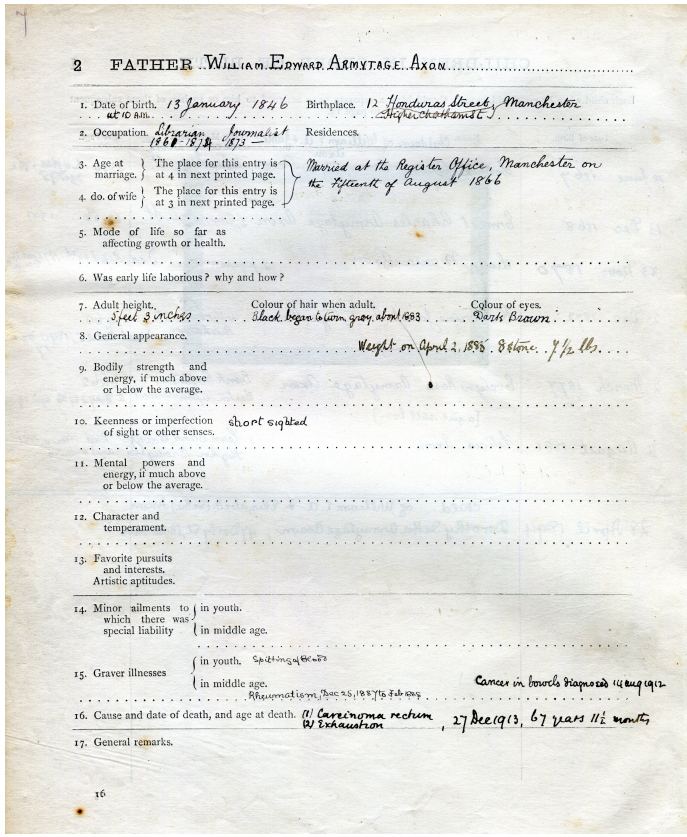
handsome youth. His eyes were dark brown and his hair and beard ‘raven black.’[134] Mathilde Hompes who first met WEAA as a young library assistant at Campfield, described his hair as ‘a black velvet cap.’[135] A commemorative photograph from the *Vegetarian Messenger* (VM), February 1914, shows an attractive young man with delicate features and intense eyes.

So impressive was his high forehead that one friend was moved to give a phrenological analysis, ‘The upper part of his forehead was remarkably developed, giving fullness and breadth where are situated the phrenological organs of comparison, causality, and mirthfulness; these were the more noticeable as the lower or perceptive faculties were not particularly developed. The organ of ideality was also very large. His temperament was the nervous-motive.’[136] It is little wonder phrenology was eventually discredited.



Mr. AXON, aged 22, when he joined the Vegetarian Society.

Early neglect was responsible for WEAA's stunted growth. Ernest described his father as 'ricketty.' On the AFB Galton form, WEAA was recorded in 1885 as five feet three inches in height, weighing eight stone seven and a half pounds. The form detailed that he suffered spitting of blood as a youth, and he was short-sighted.



2 FATHER William Edward Armytage Axon

1. Date of birth. 13 January 1846 at 10 a.m. Birthplace. 12 Honduras Street, Manchester
2. Occupation. Librarian 1868-1874 Journalist 1873 — Residences. Higher Crumpsall
3. Age at marriage. } The place for this entry is at 4 in next printed page.
4. do. of wife } The place for this entry is at 3 in next printed page.
Married at the Register Office, Manchester on the fifteenth of August 1866
5. Mode of life so far as affecting growth or health.
6. Was early life laborious? why and how?
7. Adult height. 5 feet 3 inches Colour of hair when adult. Black, began to turn grey, about 1883 Colour of eyes. Dark Brown
8. General appearance. Weight on April 2, 1888. 8 stone. ½ lbs.
9. Bodily strength and energy, if much above or below the average.
10. Keenness or imperfection of sight or other senses. short sighted
11. Mental powers and energy, if much above or below the average.
12. Character and temperament.
13. Favorite pursuits and interests. Artistic aptitudes.
14. Minor ailments to which there was special liability { in youth. in middle age.
15. Graver illnesses { in youth. Scarlatina & Measles in middle age. Rheumatism Dec 25, 1887 to Feb 1888 Cancer in bowels diagnosed 14 Aug 1912
16. Cause and date of death, and age at death. (1) Carcinoma rectum (2) Exhaustion 27 Dec 1913, 67 years 11½ months
17. General remarks.

16

Several observers mentioned his head being too large for his body, even more apparent when he later grew his ‘great beard, bushy hair.’[137] One of his little daughters later said he was a ‘furrin-looking little man.’[138] As a young man, none of this detracted from the appeal of his romantic dark looks and lively spirit. His tendency to shyness was countered by his enjoyment of company.

WEAA had grown up in the lively circle of his

adopted family, enjoying word games, quips, rhymes, and fun. There may have been a piano and reproductions of paintings for the Axons were middle class, albeit on the lower end of the scale. There is some evidence of various Axons participating in the social and cultural life of the city. J P Harrison, secretary of the Manchester Mechanics Institute, in sending his condolences to WEAA on the death of his adopted sister, Charlotte in 1868, gave a glimpse of such activities, 'I was deeply concerned to hear of your sister's death; the more so as I remember her well and she formed one of a homely group with whom I spent a very pleasant evening some time ago. She had a little girl who sang in a very funny, pretty way. The poor child's songs will be rudely hushed now.'[139]

Courtship

In 1863, WEAA took his first steps into print. His post as a library assistant nurtured his writing, providing stimulus, opportunity, and useful networks. Rapidly he encompassed librarianship, statistics, antiquarian scholarship, literary poetry, and sketches as well as creative dialect writing, studies of Lancashire folk speech, folk song, and folklore.

Two of his dialect poems related to his courtship of Jane Woods. There is no account of how they first met but WEAA was at this time familiarising himself with the 'County Palatine of Lancaster,' providing himself with material. Rambling was a passion. He explored the outlying lands of mill towns, with their reputed haunts of boggarts, their ancient dwellings, weaver poets, dialect, and folk

song.

He combined this in the mid 1860s with recruiting for the Manhood Suffrage League as far afield as Ashton-under-Lyne. The railway network enabled his excursions, and WEAA encountered local writers and newspaper editors especially around Ashton-under-Lyne, Lees, and Saddleworth. Duckinfield, now Duckenfield, where Jane lived, was close to Ashton-under-Lyne. Known as a radical town there were several there who may have introduced WEAA to Jane, well admired for her music. Ill health prevented her from developing a musical career.

Ernest looked back at his parents' marriage with wonder. He debated whether the marriage was prompted by WEAA's promotion to Sub-Librarian although this was still 'a rash step' for 'The dignity of the office was greater than the salary.' Ernest felt that WEAA's income was 'considerably less than sensible people would dare to marry on nowadays.' As well as amazement at his father's plunge into marriage, Ernest was struck by how he even managed it, 'It is one of the mysteries of his life how he found time for the necessary preliminaries to marriage and when he did his courting, but done it was with the usual accompaniments of the literary lover.

To this period belongs his dialect poem *Courtin Toime*, one of his best dialect poems. It was precious to WEAA as he included it amongst his other dialect sketches published in 1867. [140] On the page opposite to *Courtin Toime* is his mainstream poem, *Dukinfield Belles*, another tribute. The family recognised the significance: WEAA's grandson Geoffrey included it in his edition of *An Axon Treasury*. [141]

Jane Woods and Her Family

One photograph of Jane, taken at forty-one

years old, survives.[142] Despite the unflattering, tightly drawn hair, Jane is a striking woman with a fine, intelligent face and light, penetrating eyes.

Jane Axon aged 41

Her details on the Galton form are as follows. She was born on 6 May 1843 at Dukinfield, Cheshire. She had black hair, blue eyes and, on 2 April 1885, weighed only seven stone three and a half pounds. Question 11 on the form concerns 'Mental powers and energy, if much above or below the average'. The comment for Jane is 'Mrs Axon was an excellent judge of character.' Jane's family tree in AFB is more straightforward than WEAA's. Both her parents came from working backgrounds, and both have radical stories in their family history, preserved through notes and letters in AFB. She had two older sisters, Sarah Maria, and Mary Lucy.

Jane's father, John Woods, was born at 40 Back Piccadilly in

Manchester city centre on 26 February 1817. He came from a long line of woollen drapers and tailors, based variously in Ashton, Ormskirk, and Bollington.
Many of the Woods family emigrated to America and some contact was maintained with these distant family branches. References occur in various Axon papers to Clarkes, Fishers, Howards, Hays, and Johnsons, all relating to Jane's paternal family connections.

Jane's mother, Sarah Sophia Slack was born at Quick, a hamlet near Saddleworth, then in Yorkshire, on 3 January 1819. Sarah was the daughter of Robert Slack, a joiner, and his wife, Mary Sergeant. She never knew her father; he is described on the Galton form as having lived in Manchester, London, and Rouen where he drowned in a river whilst bathing in 1819.

Family Legend
There is a note in AFB referring to the agitation of 1812, 'Robert Slack, a Radical, was attending a meeting in the – when Joe Nadin, Deputy Constable, surprised the meeting and took the Radicals prisoners, this was in – and they were kept in prison till – without trial. In that month they were tried for sedition and acquitted.'

AFB preserves Robert's letter to his wife, sent from Lancaster Castle: a remarkably intimate and beautifully written document.

Robert's story became an Axon family legend. Years later, writing to a Mr. Linton on 31 December 1945, Ernest recalled his grandfather, John Woods, telling the tale of Robert Slack:

> 'Actually I read Manchester Man again, perhaps for the third or fourth time in my life. I never feel sure whether it is a good novel or not. To me it has always had an appeal, but then I knew Mrs Banks, a charming old lady, and almost all the public events she mentions had been known to me from childhood in tales from their childhood told me by my grandfather

> and others who claimed to have been present at Peterloo. Joe Nadin, the deputy constable, was one of the ogres of my young boyhood. It was he who arrested my great grandfather for attending one of the reform meetings described by Mrs Banks.
> '[143]

Joe Nadin was indeed a notorious monster. Gigantic and fearsome, he persecuted radicals, fabricated evidence, ran protection rackets, and became wealthy through corruption. Young Ernest was not alone in being haunted by him.

Marriage
WEAA and Jane Woods were married on the 15 August 1866 at the Register Office in Manchester. WEAA had moved yet again for his address is given as 77 Clopton Street, Hulme. He is described on the certificate as 'William Edward Armitage Axon, otherwise William Edward Whitehead', librarian. The father's name and occupation were left blank, a reminder of the realities of his illegitimacy. It was not uncommon for people to add fictitious names to avoid the stigma, but WEAA chose neither to include his natural father or to disguise him. By this time Edward Armytage had disappeared from his son's life.

Jane Woods was recorded as a spinster, twenty-three years old, address Queens Road, Collyhurst, and her father given as John Woods, tailor.
Joseph John Alley, WEAA's friend from his youth, and Alfred Cooke were the witnesses. Alfred Cooke was probably one of Jane's Cooke relations from her maternal grandmother's side.

After their marriage, WEAA and Jane set up their home at 5 Joynson Street, Strangeways, in the Cheetham district. Jane's father, her mother, and her sister Mary Lucy moved in

with them. Jane's other sister, Sarah Maria, was married to Charles Armitage, a grocer in Ashton-under-Lyne. There is an odd family legend that Charles Dickens visited them there on business and amused the children.[144]

His Wife Looked After These Things for Him

Strangeways, like much of Manchester and Salford, had distinct phases of development. In the eighteenth century the 'several times rebuilt'[145] Strangeways Hall was surrounded by parklands and pleasure gardens, complete with a fishpond. Then came the growth of pleasant middle class residential areas with some dye, print, and brick works. Decline came from the 1850s onwards when industrial expansion overwhelmed the district. Cheap housing spilled over from Manchester's Hunt Bank and along the railways. Strangeways Hall was demolished in 1859 and replaced by Alfred Waterhouse's Italianate Strangeways Prison and Assize Courts in 1868. The district became principally Jewish. It is likely Joynson Street was a row of lower middle-class terraced housing. The Salem Methodist New Connexion Day School was started on Joynson Street in 1871. Joynson Street has long disappeared, even before the clearances of the

1960s, probably blitzed in WW2 when the Strangeways Assize Courts were destroyed.

WEAA's colleague, William Robert Credland, joined them as a lodger. Another youthful friend, John Searle Ragland Phillips left an account of the household's convivial gatherings. Phillips cautiously added that Jane's father was a 'curious character.'[146] Ernest commented that Jane's parents moved in 'to eke things out' but he doubted whether 'this was a help or a hindrance' due to John Woods.[147]

Phillips was rather amazed at WEAA's casual attitude to the material side of life. He ascribed WEAA's risking an early marriage to the chaotic circumstances of his childhood, 'His upbringing had been scanty, in some respects neglected. He was not a man who could take thought for the morrow as to what he should eat and what he should drink and wherewithal he should be clothed, and his wife looked after these things for him.'

Social Gatherings

According to Phillips, 5 Joynson Street was a lively household with young men and women, himself included, regularly dropping in. In Phillips's case this was on his way home from town. His sisters joined in the friendly circle and brought along their friend Mathilde Hompes, also known to WEAA from Campfield Library. A year later a distinguished gentleman joined them, the London barrister and later MP, L A Atherley Jones. He was the son of the Chartist Ernest Jones, WEAA's hero and his mentor at the Crichton Club.

Joseph John Alley was a frequent visitor to 5 Joynson Street. When Alley was away in Belfast, he and WEAA exchanged gossipy letters. In one, dated 21 September 1867, WEAA paints a happy picture of their usual habits:

> ‘I dare say you will say, “What the unmentionable has he sent this long rigmarole for?” And I will tell you. Because when I am out of town what I miss are not theological or scientific disquisitions, but the unrestrained and not always very important gossip that one indulges in with a friend or two. Fancy that you are walking down to Joynson St and that I am talking all this nonsense on the way.’[148]

Alley, Credland, Mathilde Hompes, and Phillips remained close to WEAA throughout his life.

An important outcome of these social gatherings was that several of these young people became vegetarians. Phillips and his wife later confessed to being ‘back sliders,’ but his beloved elder sister remained vegetarian. WEAA and Mathilde Hompes became key members of the Vegetarian Society (VS).

WEAA joined the VS on 27 September 1868 and according to the family record immediately became treasurer. It was very much a Manchester based organisation with its roots in the Bible Christian Church Salford.

Move to Rusholme

The harmony of the household at 5 Joynson Street was affected by the vagaries of WEAA’s father-in-law, John Woods. Lydia, WEAA’s mother, was aware of the difficult situation. She enquired in her letter of 21 July 1867 whether ‘you have got a house to yourselves

or not.' [149]

The household grew with the births of children. Sophie Grace Armytage was born on 18 June 1867. On 26 September 1867 WEAA gave Joseph Alley the 'small beer chronicle' that 'Jennie & the Baby (with a capital B) are both very well. We have called our dawg Jackson.'[150] There always seems to have been a family dog adding to the chaos and love. Ernest Charles Armytage came next on 13 December 1868, named after the Chartist Ernest Jones. Lucy Maria was born on 23 November 1870 and bestowed with the middle names of her two aunties, Jane's sisters. The 1871 Census records the three in-laws still living in the household at 5 Joynson Street. Later in the year WEAA, Jane, their three children, and the in-laws moved to 4 Victoria Street, Rusholme.

Just after being recorded in the census and soon after the move, Lucy died on 23 September 1871 and was buried at Rusholme Road Cemetery. There is a little poem in her memory in AFB, surely penned by WEAA,

'Her lips have had their latest kiss,
Dry your eyes and come away,
In a better land than this
Baby lives to-day.'

Jane's mother Sarah Sophia died on 1 September 1873 and was buried at the Dissenters' Burial Ground, Rusholme Road Cemetery.

Between 1871 and 1873 Jane's sister, Mary Lucy left to marry her widower Matthew Fisher of Ashton-under-Lyne and her first child was born in September 1874. AFB notes that Mary Lucy and her children, Samuel, Charles, and Sophia were 'life vegetarians' as was Matthew's son, Albert, from his first marriage. Phillips observed that WEAA's household was becoming a hub for vegetarians, and Mary Lucy may well have been one of the people who adopted the cause there. The vegetarian connection reinforced the continuing closeness of the Axons and Fishers.WEAA and Jane's third daughter, Katharine Janet Armytage Axon, was born on 2 December 1872.

John Woods Leaves

John Woods had been a temperate, hard-working man but for some reason turned to drink. A daguerreotype photograph of him taken when he was around thirty-five years of age shows a sombre, haunted man.

John Woods aged 35

A later photograph taken in 1885 shows him looking lost. He had experienced unremitting work from an early age, labouring at the age of five at a 'Rope Wheel,' then working in cotton factories until he was ten.

The problems with John Woods continued and he left WEAA's household after his wife died. According to AFB, John Woods then married a widow, Ann Macdonald. There is a mysterious note on the Woods family tree in AFB, 'She was aunt a la mode de Bretagne of Beatrice Lindsay of Girton College.' Beatrice Lindsay was a close friend of the Axons, well known as a feminist and as an active member of VS.
John's second wife Ann died in 1885. AFB records that John moved to his other daughters in Ashton-under-Lyne, sewing for their children. This too went wrong. Ernest recorded that in 1889, 'he grew dissatisfied with the provision made for him by his three sons in law and they grew dissatisfied with his disreputable drinking habits.' He also became almost blind a few years before his death.

The result was that he went to the workhouse of the Ashton-under-Lyne Union. In 1890 John Woods wrote piteously to Ernest of his plight after a fall and an attack of paralysis. He had alienated other family members but there seems to have been a sympathetic bond between grandfather and grandson. He stayed at the workhouse, returning to spend his last few weeks at the home of his daughter, Sarah Maria, and her husband, Charles Armitage. He died there on 26 May 1892. Ernest wrote sympathetically of his tormented

grandfather.

> ‘John Woods, her father, was not an adept at making a living. His life was a kaleidoscope series of changes from being master, journeyman, foreman, master, and from being a shining light in teetotal societies to being an awful example there. He was a character but not an ideal father-in-law for a poor man. Yet I do not remember WEAA ever expressing regret for his early marriage and the money coming in, though little, was sufficient. They were years of poverty perhaps but not of impecuniosity.’[151]

The impact of dealing with his father-in-law affected WEAA, and friends believed turned him into a fervent temperance man. Joe Haddow commented tersely in *We Two* that WEAA ‘had suffered acutely from alcoholism at close quarters and had acquired a determined objection to alcohol in any form.’ All this is corroborated by the Temperance Pledge card in AFB, signed by WEAA on 24 December 1867.

A Marriage Partnership

Perhaps to his cautious friends an early marriage was improvident, and certainly there were financial struggles as well as tensions with

John Woods. However, it is from this period that WEAA really bloomed on all his literary, antiquarian, and reform fronts. He owed much to Jane both for enabling his freedom for these ventures and for sharing them.

The household of in-laws, including the intemperate father-in-law, constant visitors discussing every subject under the sun, several with literary ambitions, the lodger from work, and very soon daughters and a son, present a Dickensian picture of a young marriage. But Jane Woods was no childish Dora. As Phillips pointed out it was WEAA's wife who shouldered the burdens, looking after him as well as the whole busy household. Nor was she one of Dickens' rather nauseating domestic angels, having her own creative talents and interests outside the home as well as helping WEAA with his research.

J P Harrison, was glad WEAA had Jane to console him on the death of his adopted sister Charlotte in 1868, 'You have a good wife to share your sorrow and in some degree alleviate it.'[152]

WEAA's own view of early marriage is evident in the work he published in 1883 under the pseudonym of Dudley Armytage, Esq., *How to Succeed in the World: a Manual for Young Men*. In his chapter on marriage, he cited Anne Denman, wife of the artist John Flaxman, who proved to Sir Joshua Reynolds that he was mistaken in prophesying the marriage would be a bar to success. WEAA declared, 'In marriage the most important matter is to marry a real woman, who is willing to be a

real wife. If she is a help meet unto the man, whatever may seem imprudent about the union will be so in appearance only.'[153] WEAA knew his apparently reckless step had paid off beyond measure.

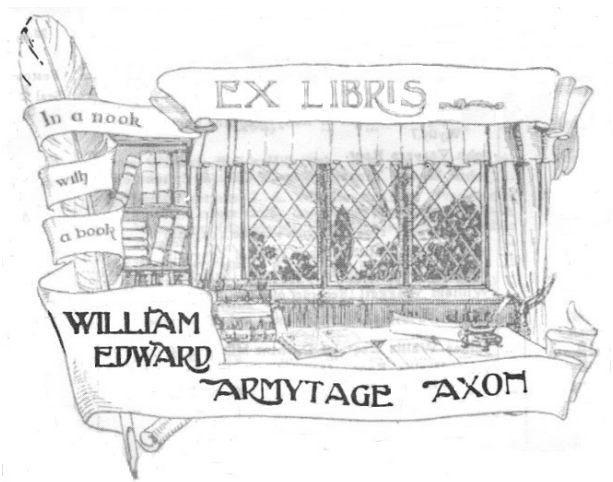
Robin O'Dingle and His Alice

Although WEAA kept the personal out of his writing I am convinced that his imagined couple, Robert o'Dingle and Alice, were fondly drawn from his own happiness with Jane. Appearing in various forms in at least three publications around 1870, Robin 0'Dingle and Alice were entangled in a farcical episode on Southport Sands. But it is the affectionate portrait of their relationship that is the most striking. The couple are best friends, Alice is a helpmeet, and they live in a black and white cottage, with diamond leaded panes, under the shade of trees, surrounded by the flowers and fruits Robin loves. Alice is fondly sketched, 'She was a healthy, comely Lancashire witch, whose fixed idea was, that of all the men in the world Robin o'Dingle was the handsomest and cleverest.'[154] Incidentally, 'Lancashire witch', is a high compliment.

Bookplate

Bookplates were iconic items for bibliophiles, and they are still enthusiastically collected. I wondered what WEAA's own bookplate would reveal. I failed to track down an original, but an AP letter gave a lead. C F Newcombe, librarian at Camberwell contacted WEAA to request a copy of the *Journal of the Ex Libris Society* with the reproduction of WEAA's bookplate.[155]

I expected to find something on heraldic or antiquarian lines but instead there is a simple view from a cosy cottage window, very similar to Robert o'Dingle and Alice's home.[156] Judging by this design, drawn by the artist James Canning, this represented WEAA and Jane's dream home too.



CHAPTER 6

IN A LITERARY SENSE, IT SEEMS LIKE LEAVING HOME

Stretching his Wings

WEAA had made dynamic progress as a library assistant and his career continued apace after his marriage. By 1869, as Sub-Librarian, he was earning thirty-six shillings a week. A year later, weekly payments changed to an annual salary, a fundamental difference in status. WEAA had joined the professional middle class. His salary started at £110, rising to £120 in 1871 and to £140 in 1872, equivalent to nearly sixteen thousand pounds today. The amount would have had much greater purchasing power in 1872.

Significantly his reputation as a librarian, scholar and expert in the book trade, was now reaching beyond Campfield. Others were taking note of this unusual young man. William Canning made a salient point, 'He earned at the library a reputation for knowing everything, and would as a common incident have a small queue of inquirers waiting for their turn in front of his desk. His fame had spread beyond Manchester even in those early days.'[157]

Your Willing Courtesy

Mr. A W Goldshaw, asking for advice on setting up a Free Library, was appreciative of WEAA's courtesy, 'Although quite unknown to you, I venture to ask a favour of you and am

encouraged to hope that you will kindly oblige me since I have been a witness and recipient of your willing courtesy at the Free Library where I have been a frequent borrower during the last ten years.'[158]

The observations of grateful readers at Campfield pinpoint the three factors that made WEAA a star: a rare combination of knowledge, principle, and character.

His knowledge was indeed formidable, never static, and he delighted in sharing the riches. WEAA's core principle was that knowledge, and culture must be freely available, communicated, and used for the public good. He went the distance in assisting readers, and they responded to his invariable courtesy and gentle manner.

At the Desk: Lifelong Friendships

Ernest commented: 'He made many lifelong friends while at the Library both amongst the staff and over the counter, amongst the former being C W Sutton and WRC [William Robert Credland] and latter Bishop Casartelli.'[159]

Signor Louis Charles Casartelli, Bishop of Salford, related to Ernest how he had been introduced to WEAA by his father, the instrument maker, Joseph Casartelli.[160] However, their friendship really developed over the reference counter. At Campfield, Louis Casartelli found the book that inspired him to study Eastern languages, an immediate link with WEAA. They corresponded and met

frequently over the years, sharing worries, family matters as well as intense scholarly debates, and were fellow members of several Manchester societies.

Campfield brought two very important people into WEAA's life, those regular visitors to 5 Joynson Street, J S R Phillips, and Miss Mathilde Hompes.

Phillips vividly remembered his first glimpse of WEAA, 'I was at that time sweeping a floor and tying up parcels in the warehouse of S, & J. Watts & Co., in Portland Street, Manchester, and I spent my dinner hour in rushing to the free library at Campfield, for may be three-quarters of an hour's reading while surreptitiously I munched some bread and cheese, or when the warehouse was closed, after tea in the street, reading until 9 o'clock, when the great handbell rang us all out. There it was I first saw Axon, sitting at the seat of literary custom, engrossed in his work, but ever prompt to assist the enquirer after knowledge.'[161]

Mathilde Hompes remained a trusted family friend even beyond WEAA's death. She taught WEAA's daughters German, was a VS colleague, and the start of all this was Campfield, 'William E.A. Axon was my friend,

faithful and true, for some 35 years. Even before the day we were formally introduced and felt our affinity, I knew him and was helped by him when he was quite a young man in the old Reference Library in Campfield and I but a schoolgirl.'[162] Mathilde was thirteen when she came to Manchester: her parents were immigrants, her German father struggling with English. It is easy to imagine the impact of WEAA's kindness. Mathilde 'was gathered into the Vegetarian fold' through WEAA and his daughters.

At the Desk: Wider Networking

Crestadoro had his own persistent fans too. One was the Reverend Henry Green, Unitarian minister at Brook Street Chapel in Knutsford, and friend of the Gaskells. Eventually the book agent Nicholas Trübner, suggested to Green that he should 'ask that little man Axon at the public library.'[163] Green switched his demands to WEAA, pleading his need for special assistance, 'I made my appearance at the Free Library, Campfield, but found it as impenetrable as a Greek monastery perched at the top of a lofty rock…. Should I come again to Manchester on Friday could I meet with you? When, and where, and how?'[164]

Nicholas Trübner (1817-1884) was an eminent London book agent, specialising in the American, Indian, and Asian trade. He was also a scholarly publisher, bibliographer, and linguist, a man of international standing. It may seem surprising that the young WEAA had made an impact on a bookman as renowned as Trübner, but this pattern of initial acquaintance leading to recognition of WEAA's outstanding abilities occurs repeatedly in his dealings with older, prominent figures. With Trübner, the contact started through library business, leading to bibliographic commissions for WEAA, and a lengthy correspondence that continued until Trübner's death.

As he did for many of his older friends, WEAA wrote Trübner's obituary, a three-page memorial article in the *Library Chronicle.* This was reprinted together with obituaries from major literary and trade periodicals in *Trübner's Record*. WEAA's detailed obituary with his first-hand knowledge of Trübner outclasses them all and is still cited as a source. As well as providing a wealth of information, WEAA captured the narrative of a penniless German clerk in London, 'architect of his own fortune,' who became a global force, publisher of works that transformed American, European, and Oriental scholarship. WEAA clearly empathised with the boy who picked up his education as a hard-working bookseller's apprentice.[165]

WEAA was a powerhouse at Campfield: his advice was sought by scholars and authors,

and he acted as a broker with agents, publishers, editors, and booksellers. His range of bibliographic, linguistic, and literary knowledge enabled him to anticipate their needs. And most telling of all, his heart and mind were fully engaged in these enterprises, and this brought him warm responses. The AP correspondence repeatedly shows how generously he went out of his way to help, even creating networks between researchers. Thus, as well as the Trübner correspondence we find WEAA connecting Henry Green with the great bookseller Bernard Quaritch. Henry Green, on 24 August 1868, thanked WEAA 'for your great courtesy and attention in sending me Mr. Quaritch's slip' and reported that 'I quite agree with Q in the opinion that the copy he bought.'[166]

Mrs Gaskell died in 1865. Two of her daughters were married and two, Margaret (Meta) and Julia remained at home with their father, the Reverend William Gaskell. William Gaskell and the Misses Gaskell appreciated WEAA's help at Campfield and, no doubt, heard his praises from their good friend Henry Green. WEAA was entering the crème de la crème of Manchester cultural society. There

are nearly fifty AP letters from Meta to WEAA, running from 1885 to her death in 1913, mirroring a confidential friendship. Incidentally it is important to realise that many of WEAA's friendships were already well established when he started to archive the correspondence. One writer, for example, using AP, dates 1885 as the start of WEAA's friendship with Meta and Julia Gaskell: in reality, they were at the very least acquainted in the Campfield days.[167]

Campfield Library Networks

Andrea Crestadoro, Thomas Baker and Harry Rawson from the Library Committee, R W Smiles, Joseph Radford, Charles Dyall, Charles W Sutton, W R Credland and Lawrence Dillon, as well as librarians outside Manchester represent friendships from WEAA's Campfield years. Usually there was a sharing of other interests as well as librarianship. Thomas Baker was a Unitarian minister and close friend of William Harrison Ainsworth: Harry Rawson was a printer, bookseller, and promoter of the Manchester Mechanics Institute, involved in the Whitworth, Owens College, and the Art Gallery. Both men were formidable civic leaders. Charles Dyall made his mark in Liverpool as first curator of the Walker Art Gallery. WEAA corresponded with him on the vexed question of his invention of the library indicator.

Andrea Crestadoro

WEAA's articles on the development of balloons, the steam hammer, and the book he edited, *The Mechanics Friend*,[168] surely owe something to Crestadoro. Development of the patent collections together with patent reform

strongly engaged Crestadoro and WEAA learnt from him. The *Co-operative News* published WEAA's long article denouncing the current state of Patent Laws.[169] This blistering attack on 'the vices of class legislation' and a 'clogged up' system would have been noted by many workers and manufacturers. WEAA's expertise in patents certainly helped with his next employment.

Although genial and well liked, Crestadoro verged on the reclusive. WEAA penetrated this privacy and was close enough to him to receive informal and light-hearted letters. Only a few colleagues, including WEAA, ever sent their regards to Mrs Crestadoro in their letters. Presumably only these few were acquainted with her.

Crestadoro's regard for WEAA was manifest in his inclusion of WEAA's poem *The Grave of Little Tim*[170] and his pamphlet *Free Libraries of Great Britain*[171] in his prototype 1868 sheaf catalogue, a compliment that WEAA would have appreciated. On 12 October 1877 Crestadoro included the same pamphlet amongst the six key books on Free Libraries he recommended to James Kennedy of Belfast. Crestadoro welcomed WEAA's ability to promote the Free Library movement through talks, papers and detailed studies like the *Handbook of the Public Libraries of Manchester and Salford*.[172]

WEAA returned the regard. In an early article, *Public Free Libraries*, he highlighted Crestadoro's remarkable pamphlet, *The Art of Making Catalogues of Libraries*, and continued to mention him in several later papers and talks.[173]

Ernest gave a final glimpse. Crestadoro detested high shelves as they were difficult for the women assistants. He did not approve of children playing on ladders either. Ernest recalled Crestadoro in a letter to his friend and former colleague, John Swann, dated 29 March 1938, 'Harrop was certainly the last to have worked under Crestadoro, as it is nearly sixty years since he died, but he is not quite the last link. I remember being lifted down from a library ladder by the Dr and warned not to do such dangerous things as climbing ladders. I must have been about five then, but I don't remember him later.'[174] It is good to think of WEAA taking his children to visit Campfield, very much his home from home.

Charles William Sutton

Ernest believed WEAA's friendship with Charles William Sutton started at Campfield when they were both boy assistants. However, it is possible that WEAA already knew Charles as the son of a well-established Manchester bookseller, Thomas Sutton. There were three sons, all spending their lives amongst books. Richard followed

his father into the trade whilst Charles and John joined the Free Library service. John became the first librarian of the Cheetham Branch. He suffered from poor health and died in service in 1874.

Charles was two years younger than WEAA. He joined the Free Library in 1865 as a boy assistant at 10/- and rose rapidly, becoming the protégé of the Library Committee Chair, Thomas Baker. Sutton worked in partnership with Baker and took on much responsibility, especially in the practical running of the libraries and the move of the Reference Library to the Old Town Hall when the Campfield building collapsed in 1877.

As with Crestadoro's own succession to Smiles, the Library Committee did not look further than appointing Sutton when Crestadoro died in 1879. Sutton remained a strong presence in WEAA's life. They had common interests in librarianship, scholarship, the vegetarian movement, and humane treatment of animals, and both were fellow members of several societies, including Chetham's Society, LCAS and MLC. They were assiduous contributors to *N&Q*, *DNB,* and local history publications, generously helping each other to publishing opportunities. Their letters have the jokes, confidences, and sharing of difficult times that mark real friendship.

Female Assistants

In 1871 Crestadoro and Thomas Baker, Chair of the Library Committee, took draconian measures to solve the unending problems of the boy assistants. They recruited females. Manchester's innovation proved an overwhelming success. By 1899, there were eleven female branch librarians and eighty-two females out of a

total of ninety-seven assistants. Steeped in prejudice, most free libraries rejected following Manchester's initiative. By 1910 three quarters of public libraries still had exclusively male staff.

Although there is no actual record of his input WEAA, as an advocate of women's rights, would have welcomed the change. WEAA certainly supported his new female colleagues. Margaret Hannay was subjected to bullying from her colleagues, Miss Clara Glynn and John Locking. Margaret wrote to WEAA in Crestadoro's absence, confiding her unhappiness, and he did all he could to calm the situation down.

In one case at least, the contact lasted long after WEAA had left Campfield. He corresponded with Susan Rhodes, the very first female assistant, over a medical matter in 1883.

Widening Library Network

WEAA may have been shy as a young man, but he was bold in initiating correspondence with older people, pre-eminent in their various fields, including librarianship. His diplomatic offers of information, material, or comment drew even the wary into his net. In the early days, WEAA had approached several established authors. Now as a published writer he had the pleasure of attracting notice himself. The Chief Librarian of Birmingham, John Davies Mullins, wrote to express his admiration for WEAA's 1869 paper on public libraries whilst taking him up on his comments on Birmingham. A warm correspondence developed, with Mullins eventually inviting WEAA to visit.

Thomas Formby, Chief Librarian at Liverpool Free Libraries, wrote to WEAA as a friend, despite their different status, discussing all sorts of library business and gossip with him, and seeking his opinion on a variety of matters. A typical letter, dated 7 March 1871, is full of interest: a chat about Leeds and the librarian Mr Yates, a mention of Mr Mullins'

article in the *British Workman*, a query about the principle of Mr Elliot's indicator system in Wolverhampton, a proposed art journal, appointments to the new School Board, and the Manchester way of bringing libraries to the people through branches.

WEAA never let any opportunity go to waste, especially in the recycling of knowledge. At this stage, he was producing lists for *Trübner's Record,* [175]and he shared snippets with other librarians and bibliophiles. His rewards were friendship, further exchanges, publishing commissions, and a growing reputation as a talented young man.

He covered official correspondence in Crestadoro's absence, making full use of the opportunity to impress key figures in the United States, such as Justin Winsor, the Harvard Librarian. WEAA's first letter to Winsor on 18 September 1872 is a masterpiece, going far beyond a standard reply. WEAA pointed out the difference between the elucidatory notes that Crestadoro innovated in the Hulme Branch Library catalogue, and the more critical notes Winsor employed. He included a cutting from the

Guardian that might be of interest to Winsor.

WEAA gradually developed wider correspondence in his own right, becoming well known in Anglo-American bibliographic circles as a writer and speaker on library topics.

Universal Art Catalogue
Both Crestadoro and WEAA were advocates of national, international, and universal catalogues, concepts only achievable in the computer age. WEAA strongly supported Crestadoro's idea that the BML catalogue should be a national catalogue.

WEAA was involved in one of the first attempts to create such a catalogue in the field of art. This was another key step in his name becoming known outside Manchester.

There is a certificate in AFB that testifies to WEAA's being a contributor to Henry Cole's scheme to create a catalogue covering not only the art books in the South Kensington Museum, the forerunner of the V&A, but all the art books in the whole library network. The accompanying letter thanking WEAA for his 'kind assistance towards completing the Universal Catalogue of Art Books' is dated 16 July 1869 and marked as No. 29752.

In fact, 'completing' is rather an exaggeration as only one part of the work ever appeared, and this was in the columns of *The Times*. The outcry over this use of public money ended Henry Cole's project.

The Universal Catalogue of Art Books is an intriguing episode in library history that deserves investigation. From a WEAA perspective, it is an early example of his activities on a wider national platform. It is also an example of his mission for art to be accessible in the public sphere.

Writing on Libraries
WEAA became an authoritative writer on libraries and librarianship, producing many

well-received books, pamphlets, and articles. He started early with a contribution on Free Libraries to the *Social Reformer* in 1866. As became his habit, he had this reprinted in Glasgow as a pamphlet.[176] The pamphlet was listed in *Trübner's Record* for 24 December 1869, the listing quite probably compiled by WEAA himself. This was probably the pamphlet that then caught the attention of Mullins, Chief Librarian of Birmingham, drawing him into WEAA's net. This evolving work eventually reached a wider audience in the prestigious British Almanac.[177]

WEAA was from the start an astute practitioner of the crafts of writing, publishing, and advertising with neither text nor opportunity wasted.

However, the most personal view he ever expressed on libraries was not in a publication but in the draft of a very long letter, dated 13 April 1872. WEAA was responding to a query from a Councillor Nidd in Stockport on the statistics and usage of the Manchester Free Libraries. WEAA referred to his own paper read before the Statistical Society of London, quoting numbers of readers. He then enhanced the statistics with sketches of readers, focusing on the mixture of all types and classes, the 'perfect equality', and the keen appetite for learning of working people. He observed the barristers, authors, clergymen, schoolboys, workers all sharing together as readers, 'I have seen a member of Parliament sitting at the same table with an artisan or warehouseman and this mixture of classes is not confined to that department but obtains more or less in all sections of our institutions.'

WEAA fervently believed in the power of the Free Libraries to transform lives. As he wrote in the draft letter, 'There can be no

doubt whatever that the libraries have wonderfully smoothed the path of anyone who desires for self-improvement, for culture of mind, soul and with increased popular education their usefulness will augment. No man in Manchester need be ignorant for he may learn some of nearly every branch of knowledge from the silent teacher provided by the public spirit of the city council.'

Provision of popular fiction for readers aroused fierce debate. WEAA, like Crestadoro, was refreshingly pragmatic, commenting in this same draft:

> 'And after all a man will not take much harm from reading Dickens or Thackeray nor can we very much blame a lad for indulging in one of Marryat's novels though one might wish [illegible] with something of more permanent value… the great thing is that we should have reading – when once he has acquired this he may be trusted to rise to higher levels of literary taste.'

I have quoted at length from the draft as it is unusually revealing of WEAA's sentiments and principles. He recognised how open he had been, adding a qualification, 'I hope these particulars may be of service to you and that the People of Stockport will soon have a library to be proud of. I have written quite freely and unofficially on the matter – the subject is one I have very much to heart. I was a reader and borrower from the Manchester libraries long before I became an official here, and whatever knowledge I have come through their agency.'

WEAA would have stripped these passages out in the official version of the letter.

Resignation

It was a shock to everyone, staff, and readers alike, when WEAA resigned as Sub Librarian early in 1874 to take up the post of business secretary to The Antilles Phosphate and Chemical Company. WEAA did not have a commercial background, and the nature of his new occupation caused general astonishment.

Was Sutton aware of his plan or taken by surprise? He sent WEAA a note on behalf of his colleagues as soon as the news broke. The text of the memo is formal, but the handwriting unusually hurried and

scrawled, ‘To Mr. W.E.A. Axon, on resigning the Sub-Librarianship of the Manchester Public Free Libraries, from the Officials of the Chief and Branch Libraries, as a testimony of their sincere esteem and respect. January 1874.’

The Library Committee bestowed an unprecedented leaving gift. WEAA wrote to the Chair, Thomas Baker, on 1 April 1874:

> ‘I beg to acknowledge the receipt of yours of 25 March and the copy of the Reference Library Catalogue. I feel extremely grateful to the Council for their kindness in giving me this work. My long familiarity with it enables me to appreciate its bibliographical worth and whilst it will be a great service to me in the studies in which I am engaged, it will have even greater value in my eyes as a memento of my last connection with the Institution.’[178]

Sutton was promoted to fill the post of Sub Librarian. Thomas Formby at Liverpool Free Libraries, writing on 5 March 1874 to Sutton about tracing an author or publisher of a particular work, added rather tactlessly ‘I knew nothing of Mr Axon’s change of position and was astonished to hear of it and I must say though no doubt the step will be one in advance I cannot help feeling some little regret. I beg however to offer my

congratulations on your own well merited and long delayed promotion.'[179]

WEAA's antiquarian mentor, Richard Wright Procter, wrote sadly, 'Sorry to hear you are leaving the Library. In a literary sense, it seems like leaving home. You will miss and be missed.'[180]

Sutton or WEAA?

WEAA's departure enabled Charles Sutton's rise, stepping in first as Deputy then as Chief Librarian when Crestadoro died in 1879. Robert Dukinfield Darbishire, an eminent lawyer and founder of the Manchester Museum, expressed regret that WEAA had lost this chance, 'It has been a great disappointment to me that another such appointment could not be offered to you here.'[181]

Ultimately Sutton's appointment benefitted Manchester Free Libraries. He was one of the greatest Chief Librarians. It is difficult to imagine W EAA being such a dynamic leader as Sutton.

From Greenwood's Library Year Book, 1897.

Mr. Charles William Sutton, F.L.A.

Born at Manchester in 1848. Appointed an Assistant in the Manchester Public Libraries in 1865, and succeeded to the Chief Librarianship in 1879, which post he still holds. Vice-President of the Library Association, and a contributor to its transactions. He is author of a *List of Lancashire Authors*, 1876, and a valuable paper on *Special Collections of Books in Lancashire and Cheshire*, 1900, and has contributed articles to the Dictionary of National Biography, &c.

There are similarities between WEAA and his friend, Casartelli, in that their strengths lay in scholarship rather than administration. Casartelli was dismayed at the prospect of becoming Bishop of Salford in 1903, dreading the organisational burden. His request to decline the role was refused, and the scholar had to evolve into manager. All the evidence indicates that although WEAA was one of the bright stars of Manchester Free Library, Sutton was the better man to succeed Crestadoro. However, WEAA continued to be actively involved in library movement.

Could WEAA have made it to the Top?

The Manchester historian Terry Wyke speculated that WEAA was oddly unsuccessful as a librarian, citing his failed applications for post of Librarian at Bolton Free Library in

1866 and for the post of Chief Librarian of the Birmingham Free Libraries in 1879.[182] Even when he became a *Guardian* journalist, WEAA did not entirely abandon the notion of a career in librarianship. On the death of the Chetham's librarian, Mr. Jones, in 1875, both the novelist William Harrison Ainsworth and WEAA sounded out James Crossley on whether to apply for the post. Harrison Ainsworth soon recognised he had been misguided by the romantic idea of living in the enchanted place. Crossley replied rather discouragingly to WEAA on 7 March 1877, pointing out that the post had traditionally been filled by a 'a single man and a graduate.'[183] It also only paid £100 and board per annum, a lower rate than WEAA had earned as Sub Librarian at Manchester Free Library. WEAA's attraction to the post, like Ainsworth's, may have been largely sentimental; the role of Chetham's librarian is so steeped in the history of the city that it is almost sacred. It was only in the mid twentieth century that a woman, Hilda Lytham, was appointed. Ernest wrote to congratulate her.[184]

The coveted position of Chief Librarian of

Birmingham Free Libraries came up in 1879. WEAA knew both the library and its highly respected Chief Librarian, Mullins. He took trouble with his application, and although it looks over the top to modern eyes, such presentations were standard. He attached an extensive printed document of thirty-one supporting testimonies with supplements added, from a whole range of significant, predominantly Manchester, men.[185] These make rich reading and there is praise for WEAA's energetic powers of organisation as shown in several local societies. The overall focus of the testimonies, however, was on his scholarly, bibliographic, and reference skills.

The great bibliophile, James Crossley, as might be expected, admired WEAA as an 'accomplished bibliographer' well used to all library business, adding with less interest, 'I conceive that he would be found to possess administrative talents, so far as they are called for in the situation he solicits, of no common description.'

In the event, WEAA did not fail in the Birmingham application for the vacancy was withdrawn at the last minute. WEAA added a postscript to his application, having just heard of the disastrous fire that destroyed the library and its collections. In the emergency, Mullins agreed to return from retirement.

In July 1885 WEAA apparently toyed again with the idea of a return to the library world, this time to the BML itself. His friend, Richard Garnett, the Keeper of the Printed Books, replying to his query, assumed he wanted the information for himself, and described in detail the arcane process of gathering Bishops, Earls, or other establishment leaders to sponsor nominations.

Dynasty
Three generations of Axons served Manchester Public Libraries: WEAA from 1861 to 1874, Ernest from 1881 to 1932, and his son, Geoffrey Rogerson, from 1911 to 1952.
Ernest and Geoffrey must have been very conscious of the closeness of the past, especially when handling the catalogues, indexes, and collections WEAA had developed. Ernest met his father's colleagues as a child, grew up to work with some of them, and picked up on library gossip about past librarians his father would have known. Geoffrey, too, shared colleagues with both his father and grandfather.

All three played their part in the LA and in the development of public librarianship. Ernest served under Sutton for forty years, becoming his deputy. Ernest was an adept allrounder, described as 'terse, concise and remarkably accurate, and right to the time of his retirement he had a remarkable grip upon every detail of library administration.'[186]

Ernest Charles Armytage Axon

Ernest was amused by imagining how they might all be remembered at MCL. As he joked to a retired colleague on 24

January 1936:

> ‘Thirty years hence, when we come to die, we may similarly cause a little ripple of interest in the library staff; “I wonder if that Axon whose death is in today’s paper is the Axon who used to spend his time initialling our catalogue slips” someone may say, and the other will say “I don’t know, but if the age corresponds with that in the old staff books it is probably the same.” And the City Treasurer of the day will say that the old boy had a jolly good return for his money. He paid in a shilling and has drawn out £2.12.1/2.’.[187]

CHAPTER 7

INKSLINGING RINGS

Print Comrades

Writing was not a solitary occupation as far as the young WEAA and his friends were concerned. They gambolled enthusiastically in fields of print, sharing their finds, embarking on their manuscript or cheaply printed magazines, setting up clubs, joining societies and generally having a good time. There were, of course, the contemplative hours for reading, research, and actual composition but all these were likely to take place in the crowded library, the noisy room in lodgings or a corner of a busy household.

Between 1861 and 1874 WEAA evolved from boy assistant to sub-librarian, from bachelor to husband and father. In the same period, he progressed from youthful scribbling to confident authoring. He revelled in intellectual friendships as well as in fostering the relationships that would get him into print. His friend John Fraser of the Tobacco Factory, Liverpool, knew WEAA was the best person to help a Mr. W Lewin who was 'a good fellow and anxious to get into the inkslinging "ring."'[188] WEAA then spent years dealing patiently with Walter Lewin's authorial difficulties. Walter Lewin died in 1905, a much loved if eccentric journalist on the *Birkenhead News*.

WEAA rapidly acquired a reputation in several print communities both as a trustworthy expert and as one who was generous in assisting others.

Why the dickens didn't you go in for a paper?

WEAA took every opportunity to get published. He had an alchemist's touch, turning talks into papers, papers into essays to be combined into books, or recycled as talks or revisions. He used his entries in *N&Q*, his bibliographical investigations, his activities on behalf of societies, chapels, and reform organisations, as ingredients for more advanced articles, pamphlets, and books.

In 1867, Joseph John Alley sent WEAA a jovial account of his trip to a Congress held at Queen's University Library, Belfast. His letter, and WEAA's three replies, are full of gossip, literary news and in jokes. WEAA mentions his forthcoming pamphlet on Trade Unions 'which so greatly excited your ire' and then restrains himself from going on about his favourite topic, 'However, I will not begin to talk printed matter.'[189]

He cannot refrain, however, and in the next letter jokingly reproaches Alley for not exploiting his talks as papers, 'You have not yet done speaking, I suppose. Why the dickens

didn't you go in for a paper?' He then directs Alley to 'look out for my paper' in the journal *Meliora*.[190]

Meliora was an important quarterly, published by the temperance organisation Alliance, and 'aimed to provide a platform for academic and policy debates on various social amelioration projects, including temperance.'[191] WEAA's paper, *Public Free Libraries*,[192] is informative but also infused with understanding the miracle of free libraries for working people. WEAA appreciated the prestige of *Meliora*. His paper was recognised as an outstanding survey of the free library movement.

There was no way WEAA would miss a chance of presenting or publishing a paper. With speed and determination, he had already gate-crashed several communities of print.

Here are some of his first ventures in establishing himself in print as poet, scholar, library commentator, and journalist. His dialect writing is covered later.

1863: Newspaper Verse

Newspaper verse has been consistently overlooked as 'most of it does not meet the aesthetic criteria we (professional literary critics) would apply to "good poetry."'[193] Yet editors found that poetry attracted a huge audience and passionate discussion, especially amongst working class men and women.

Experimentation was not encouraged.

This was the first community of print that WEAA joined. It is impossible to know how many of his poems were published in his lifetime. As his grandson Geoffrey wrote 'Many of Dr. Axon's verses were published anonymously, many only initialled, and others under pennames [such] as Goldpen, Manceinion.'[194]

Ernest recorded that WEAA showed a poem to Mr Ben Chadwick, the Librarian of the Hulme Branch, who passed it to the editor of the *Middleton Albion*. It apparently appeared in 1863 in the *Poets Corner* feature. Fifty years later WEAA and Ernest failed to trace the precise date and title of this poem, despite it being the 'subject of earnest inquiry.'[195] I could not find a *Poet's Corner* in the *Middleton Albion* but there was one anonymous poem, *The Pleasures of Reading*,[196] that seemed possible.

Searching for WEAA's first poem in the Lancashire newspapers of the period, I found one poem by WEAA, not mentioned elsewhere. The poem was chosen in 1864 for the 'A Christmas Carol' 24 December spot in

the *Ashton Weekly Reporter and Stalybridge and Dukinfield Chronicle*. It is a jovial piece, full of Old Christmas and young love. This was the time of WEAA's courtship of his Dukinfield Belle, Jane:

Old Christmas

'And ye who read these verses o'er,
And count them naught but folly,
Think of the days when you have laughed
Beneath the Christmas holly.

When but a glance from Fanny's eyes
Was worth all worldly glories,
And earth had but one greater bliss
Than telling Christmas stories.'[197]

WEAA's dialect poem, *Dingle Cot*, appeared in

the same newspaper on 31 March 1866.

1864: Self-Publishing

In 1864 a fond relative, WEAA's uncle William Pownall, his adopted mother's brother, paid for WEAA's poem *Poor Little Tim* to be printed. One copy survives in MCLA, and the note with the poem suggests an additional motive for William Pownall's generosity, 'The following verses were suggested by a picture, painted by Mr. W. Pownal, junr., and now in the possession of Mr. W Preston, of Manchester, representing Thelwall Church, with the Grave of Thomas Entwistle, who died August, 1863, aged eleven years.'

WEAA is announced on the sheet as a member of the Manchester Crichton Club and presumably William Pownal[l] Jnr, artist and fellow member, was his adopted cousin.

The poem is very much an adolescent experiment with sentimental musings on death and the afterlife, and quotations in capital letters from Keats,

> 'When we groan 'midst our sorrows and toils,
> 'Neath the cares of each passing day,
> And the wings that have soared to the heavens
> Are soiled by the dust and the clay;'

Ernest referred to the poem both as *The Grave of Little Tim* and *Poor Little Tim*. Ernest mentioned that the poem was anonymous but that later that year another edition or another poem with a similar title was published with

WEAA's name together with a poem *Castle Hair* by WEAA but signed 'S. T. Comberback'. Comberback was the false name under which Coleridge had enlisted with the 15th Dragoons, an unfortunate episode from which he had to be rescued. Riddles and riddling pseudonyms delighted WEAA and his literary friends.

As an author, WEAA would sometimes self-publish poems and papers. Societies regularly published offprints of articles too and it is difficult to distinguish these from self-published pamphlets as often the same printers were involved. For example, WEAA used local printers like Hurst Bros of Stockport who also produced works for the VS. WEAA would often send copies of his works, self-published or published, to friends and contacts on the networks. The first example of this in AP is a poem he sent to R W Smiles.

Gifting a Poem

The very first letter in the AP, dated 6 February 1864, is from his old boss, Robert Wilson Smiles, the ex-Chief Librarian of Manchester. Smiles had taken up a position as editor of the *Railway News* in London.

WEAA had sent Smiles a copy of a poem, perhaps *Poor Little Tim*, and received an encouraging response. Although tired from working at night, Smiles felt he had to reply to WEAA's kind note and the 'exquisite little poem', adding, 'I am much struck by the power beauty and feeling of the lines as well as charmed by the freedom, I had almost said

vagaries, of the measure.'[198] He added, 'I had no idea your heart and lips were so touched with poetic fire.' Then, rather diffidently, he sent in exchange a prosaic offering of his own, *Railways Across Tidal Estuaries*.

Smiles' feedback must have been significant to WEAA, forming the catalyst to archive his correspondence. There is a discernible pattern in AP of WEAA's sending out copies of his works and collecting the responses.

Like many others, WEAA began with adolescent poetry but more exceptionally he continued as a poet all his life. WEAA revered poets such as Milton and Shelley but he was not snobbish in his acceptance of all sorts of literature and had few pretensions about his own poems. He rejoiced in minor poetry, 'Many people are ashamed to own acquaintance with "minor verse". I freely confess to deriving a large amount of pleasure from the humbler followers of our "bards divine".'[199]

1865: Co-operative News

When WEAA died in 1913, the *Co-operative News* published a fascinating snippet:

> 'The "Manchester Guardian" asks how many admirers of the industry and versatility of the late Dr. W.E.A. Axon

> know that he wrote a serial story in a co-operative newspaper when he was only nineteen years of age? It was eventually published as a book by "Edward Armytage." It must be fifty years ago since the story first saw the light, and it was therefore in one of the earliest of the co-operative journals that it made its appearance. Perhaps some of my readers will recall it.'[200]

This was *The Gambler's Daughter or John Dudley's Secret,*[201], published in 1895 by the temperance organisation Onward. Why WEAA waited so long to get it into book form is a mystery but perhaps he was urged to do so by Onward. WEAA might have been rather embarrassed by it as it is a very ordinary work. His use of his father's name as a pseudonym in this tale of disreputable lives and consequences, and of his mother's farm in the title, was perhaps a sign of his 'pawky' humour as the family termed it.

1866: Testing the Water

There are around a dozen AP letters from WEAA to John Joseph Alley, all very informal for these two were youthful, of not childhood, friends. However, the first letter, dated 3 September 1866 and addressed from the Manchester Free Libraries, is written far more carefully than the others. Even the handwriting is neat and

controlled rather than dashed off as a gossipy sprawl. It starts in a mock scholarly style, ‘Dear friend, Herewith I send thee a book on the Elements of Speech by William Holder. It is a very curious and learned work, and is probably the earliest attempt at a scientific analysis of the English language.’

WEAA then developed his theme as though he were composing an article, with quotations from Dr Burney, explorations of Holder’s Nottinghamshire background, a letter from the Bodleian, and the case of a young man Mr Popham who twice went deaf and was cured, causing controversy between a Dr Wallis and Dr Holder. WEAA concluded, ‘Dr. Holder certainly forestalled Isaac Pitman and his book might be called A Plan for Phonetic Spelling.’[202] WEAA is surely trying out his powers here. It is around this period that he started contributing to N&Q and it is surprising that for once he wasted copy and William Holder does not appear there.

This letter introduces two of WEAA’s lifelong interests, the teaching of those unable to hear or speak, and the whole cluster around linguistics, spelling reform, phonetic language, shorthand, and the quest for a universal language, all variously tools of communication.

WEAA was now actively seeking targets for his writing. In the same month, AP shows he sent a speculative contribution to the Editor of the Temperance Society. In the early 1870s he published papers on the teaching of the deaf and dumb and on the future of English that attracted a great deal of notice

1866: Librarianship
There was a huge demand for literature to herald the new free libraries, to persuade ratepayers of their value, to highlight issues, and to guide the pioneering staff. WEAA recognised his advantage in being in the right time and the right place to fulfil this market need. He quickly used his experiences as a librarian in the flagship of Campfield, together with his explorations of other libraries, to establish himself as a leading writer in a new field.

He started early with a contribution on Free Libraries to the *Social Reformer* in 1866. The editor, James Selkirk, was eager to publish the paper, regretting that he could not pay. Next WEAA's article *Public Free Libraries* was accepted by Henry S Sutton for *Meliora* in 1867. His pamphlet of 1869, *Free Public Libraries of Great Britain*, brought him favourable notice. WEAA used his contacts with newspapers to reach the wider audience he always aimed at. WEAA's sketches on libraries appeared regularly in the *Manchester City News*. These were later collected and expanded into book form, the prestigious *Handbook of the Public Libraries of Manchester and Salford*, still a valued reference source. WEAA really flourished in this community of print when the America Library Association (ALA) and the LA took off in the 1870s, launching prime new journals.

1866: *N&Q* Community 'More Like Friends

than Strangers'

It was the corresponding journal *N&Q* that gave WEAA, as it did many others, entry into a virtual world of scholars.

The eighteenth century witnessed a new passion for knowledge, manifest in the boom of learned periodicals and societies. Corresponding journals like the *Gentleman's Magazine* relied largely on free content, blurring lines of authorship and reader. But participation was perforce confined to the leisured and wealthy. What was lacking was a mechanism to connect individuals, to enable direct communication on a much wider scale. *N&Q* arrived in 1849 to aid them all.

The founder, William John Thoms (1803-1885), prompted by his readers, eventually described the birth of *N&Q*.[203] He and others had long played with the desirability of an 'information exchange'. The postal reform of 1849 enabled them to realise their visions. Thoms heralded *N&Q*'s mission on the title page as 'a medium of inter-communication for literary men, artists, antiquaries, genealogists, etc.' His journal was a godsend to self-educated people like WEAA,

giving entry into the hitherto enclosed circles of academic debate. In the communities of print, it had the impact of the Internet. *N&Q* is the perfect example of a community of print that was totally identified with a community of readers.

Richard Wright Procter, the Manchester historian, remarked to WEAA that correspondents in *N&Q* 'are singularly obliging and confiding - more like friends than strangers'[204] which sums it up nicely. Some of WEAA's most valuable friendships started with *N&Q*.

The popularity of *N&Q* sparked many imitators. Over time, the model was adapted with various regional or subject angles, such as *Yorkshire N&Q* or *Industrial N&Q*. It still survives to this day, a shadow of its former self, under the aegis of the Oxford University Press.

WEAA's Contributions to *N&Q*

Contributors were not paid, but regular appearance in the pages was prestigious. Whilst the journal itself was available to WEAA at the Manchester Free Library, financial constraints meant it was only by the age of twenty that WEAA could afford even the halfpenny post to send his letters.

WEAA's name appeared regularly in *N&Q* from 1866 until 1912. I estimate that his contributions total around four hundred articles and one hundred and fifty-three replies to others, and there are more under name variations. WEAA appeared as A. (W.E.A.), Axon (W.E.A.), Wm. E.A. Axon and William E.A. His alter ego, Dudley Armytage, also turns up, for example, producing seven articles in 1874, once on the same page as WEAA. WEAA comments on *Ballads of W.T.* and Dudley Armytage on *Pelegrin*.[205]

His contributions per year ranged from short letters to multiple page articles, some of which he afterwards recycled as pamphlets or as chapters in book compilations. Many were given the star spot of opening article. *N&Q* is where he learnt his craft as a writer. *N&Q* not only enhanced WEAA's reputation in and around Manchester, but also established him as a young man of unusual expertise right across Britain.

Every entry WEAA made in *N&Q* reflects the range of his reading. By 1866 he had started accumulating books, chapbooks, street ballads and manuscripts as well as having the Free

Library collections at his call. Mentions in *N&Q* give some idea of what was in his private library, 'Who is the author of *Life of Donna Rosina, a Notorious Cheat*? My copy wants the title-page…A transcript of the title-page or any information as to its authorship, would be very acceptable.'[206] Another entry sprang from his gleeful purchase of a rare pamphlet, *The Oxfordshire Dialect Book*, unrecorded by the English Dialect Society.[207] Forgers, spies, murders, executions and vampires were happily mixed in his contributions, together with more academic matters such as debates over the colourful Greek poet, Simonides of Ceos.

N&Q mirrors WEAA's personal life as well as his reading. His addresses change, some topics were inspired by his holidays, for example his visit to Wales to recuperate from illness resulted in *Dr Johnson at Gwaenynog*.[208] In some years the numbers of entries fell dramatically, suggesting a change of circumstances. One *N&Q* friend, Ralph Thomas, presumed him busy in 1869 as his name had not appeared often. In fact, WEAA had been ill. A period of his low or zero entries was usually followed by an influx.

WEAA compensated for only four entries in the last half of 1867 with an astonishing nineteen in the first half of 1868.

Like other correspondents, WEAA sought information for the pieces he was writing. For example, in 1873 he asked for help in making his bibliography of Nixon's prophecies as complete as possible.[209] He published the first edition of *Nixon's Cheshire Prophecies* in 1873 and then a second edition, enlarged with *N&Q* material, in 1878. He also asked for cases of armless people: later using the results in an article in *Pallas.*[210] It does not appear that he ever had a reply to his investigation into Placido, the Cuban Poet, executed as a rebel slave in Havana in 1844.

Again, like many other correspondents, WEAA found *N&Q* a useful platform to discreetly publicise his publications. He drops in a casual mention of his recent papers on the 'eventful history' of Cagliostro whilst providing *N&Q* readers with a 'collection of such titles as have come under my notice.'[211] Equally where he had failed to publish articles, they might turn up as a *N&Q* queries: for example, he was commissioned to investigate regimental

mottoes, and nicknames. The venture never materialised but WEAA used his findings in two *N&Q* articles in 1900.

As well as his entries, WEAA used *N&Q* to promote ideas for new societies or enterprises. He proposed new ventures such as a Society of Bibliographers,[212] gave an alternative plan for organising the projected Provincial Glossary,[213] and supported others in their campaigns. Social reforms were largely outside the antiquarian and literary interests of *N&Q*, but WEAA did slip in the occasional sly reference to vegetarianism or temperance as in his paper on James Teare.[214]

It also appears that WEAA used *N&Q* to identify words he contributed to *OED*. In 1880, the editor James Murray referred to slips he had received from WEAA, 'I am obliged also by your references to *N&Q* & all captures of special words.'[215]

N&Q Clusters of Correspondents

There are complimentary mentions of WEAA's contributions to *N&Q*. An early example is from 13 March 1869, 'an interesting article by my friend Mr W E A Axon.'[216] *N&Q* helped to forge WEAA's contacts in the scholarly

community and to establish his reputation as an authority. It was a small world and word spread. Thus, in the *Antiquarian* whose readers would invariably dip into *N&Q*, there are several favourable mentions of WEAA.

Amongst the scholars and bibliophiles from this early period who connected with WEAA through *N&Q* are William Bates, John W Bone, Richard Copley Christie, Alexander John Ellis, Henry Fishwick, Frederick James Furnivall, Walter W Skeat, Ralph Thomas, and John Thoms. Sometimes one of the scholars would recommend WEAA to another. Ellis, for example, suggested WEAA should approach Furnivall to contribute to *Country Words*, adding the warning, 'Mr Furnivall always tries to get the greatest amount of work possible out of everyone. I shd advise you to do just what you feel inclined for & then you can tell him & ask him whether it wd be of service to him.'[217]

WEAA was astute in ensuring correspondents were indebted to him. He cast his bread upon many waters and was well recompensed. Even hard-nosed London publishers like John Russell Smith tempered rejection with advice,

suggesting to WEAA that whilst interest in Cagliostro would not 'induce the public to buy another book' b do well in a monthly magazine.[218] He was right. WEAA was heaped with advice, sometimes vitriolic against others. T J Wesley-Bennett for instance warned him off the novelist William Harrison Ainsworth, 'who (hideous revelation pays "nowt" for copy!!!).'[219]

WEAA's delight in bibliographic riddles, pseudonyms and anonymous works was reciprocated by a *N&Q* regular, Ralph Thomas, and there is a series of thirty-six entertaining letters from him in AP. In the first, dated 1867, clearly following on from previous unpreserved correspondence, Ralph Thomas starts off with a joke, 'I think you have sufficiently qualified and may put F.A.S after your name (Formerly Addicted to Smoking).'[220] Ralph Thomas was the author, Olphar Phant, and WEAA contributed to his work, *Handbook of Fictitious Names*.

To his credit, WEAA was patient with those who were less eminent or less likely to be influential on his behalf and took as much trouble with their requests as he did those of the key players.

An example of a correspondent who bombarded WEAA for years with requests for books, engravings, information, and responses to his thoughts was John Pickford, first a curate at Bolton Percy, and

then later Rector of Newbourne, Woodbridge. The correspondence totals thirty-one AP letters from 1868 to 1899. Pickford gives the impression of being an isolated figure, writing in a gentle but persistent tone to WEAA, dropping hints for free material, and greatly appreciating his replies.

The venerable Rev. Frederick Charles Husenbeth (1796-1872) was astonished by WEAA's kindness in having a narrative copied for him in relation to Husenbeth's article in *N&Q*, 'I could not have expected an acquaintance, much less a stranger, to take so much pain to gratify my curiosity.' He was also astonished at how WEAA had found his full name and even 'had it quite correctly.'[221] It is true that WEAA then received a few songs from Husenbeth, a well-known hymn writer, for inclusion in the *Band of Hope Treasury* that WEAA was editing but WEAA's original action was altruistic and the correspondence continued from 1868 to 1871.

1869: Half-way House

WEAA's involvement in *Trübner's American and Oriental Literary Record,* enabled him to publish quasi articles. Trübner started this periodical list of world literature in 1865, and it only ceased with his death in 1891. An essential source for the book and library trade, it was distributed globally.

WEAA made his first appearance in 1869 when he offered a supplement to a recently published Buddhist bibliography. He suggested that using the *Records* columns to encourage others to contribute Buddhist titles would result in the widest possible coverage.[222] WEAA was careful to praise the author, Mr. Kistner, who must have been slightly mortified by seeing the titles he had overlooked.[223] WEAA won favourable notice through this clever initiative. The American journal, *The Nation*, praised WEAA's achievement in adding thirty-three works to Kistner's list.[224] This was their first mention of a name that later became important to them. In 1874 WEAA was named as editor of *Records*, an impressive rise to fame in literary and scholarly circles. The spadework of establishing a friendship with Trübner, of learning oriental languages and raising his profile in journals had paid off.

1867: Breaking into Journalism

WEAA, with his love of the curious, was inevitably drawn to the miscellaneous and, sometimes fantastic, content of newspapers. As he wrote in *Ben Brierley's Journal* of 1869, 'We are accustomed to think of our own age as one above all things wonderful. Open a newspaper

and Dr. Cumming's prophecies-the triumph of steam, the enormous gooseberry, the proceedings of the Divorce Court-all serve to strengthen our belief in the wondrous mother age being the most remarkable since Adam delved and Eve span.'[225]

Others were less keen on the ephemeral world of newspapers. WEAA's friend, the Lancashire antiquarian, John Parsons Earwaker (1847-1885), advised him that newspaper articles were lost unless they were reprinted elsewhere.[226]

Manchester and local towns were certainly buzzing with newspapers as well as weekly satirical journals like the *Sphinx* or *City Jackdaw*. Copies of local newspapers, together with the London newspapers delivered by rail, circulated through exchange-floors, inns, chop houses, factory offices, warehouses, and newspaper reading rooms, including Abel Heywood's newsroom, Procter's barbershop and, from 1852, the free libraries. The railways took copies out to the families living in the comfort of leafy Lancashire and Cheshire. It has been estimated that two-thirds of the population could read to some degree or

other in the 1840s, and that each newspaper issue was handled by around twenty readers. The repeal of the newspaper tax in 1855 had huge impact in making newspapers affordable.

The advent of the Electric Telegraph Co, in 1846 allowed 'for the first time the instant transfer of information across the country.'[227] The new technology heralded a golden age for provincial papers, ending their dependence on the London press. Manchester was the provincial leader with newspapers catering for all classes and political allegiances. Most local newspapers continued their tradition of seeking contributions from their readers, a particularly important outlet during the years of the Cotton Famine as research at the University of Exeter has shown.[228]

This explains why in the 1860s, WEAA entered the community of local journalism, engaging with those formidable gatekeepers, the newspaper editors, 'Manchester journalism was a rough old trade, rife with jealousies and rivalries. Jeremiah Garnett, co-editor of the *Guardian*, had once been physically attacked in St Ann's Square by a rival editor and had fended him off with his umbrella.'[229] The

same partisan fervour could be found in most northern cities. In Leeds, rival newspaper editors, including Samuel Smiles, hurled insults at each other in print 'though their offices were so close that they could as easily have exchanged them by shouting from their windows.'[230]

As well as having poems printed in at least two Lancashire newspapers, and his library sketches in the *Manchester City News*, it is likely that the young WEAA placed pieces in other local newspapers, either anonymously or under pseudonyms. Although most of WEAA's early contributions to local newspapers are untraceable, the AP letters indicate that he was becoming well known to editors.

The Hobson family who owned the *Ashton and Stalybridge Reporter* 'had always been associated with Radical views.'[231] WEAA and Edward Hobson Jnr, were both members of Ernest Jones' Manhood Suffrage League. WEAA had already published a Christmas poem in the newspaper and in his letter of 28 June 1865[232] Hobson discussed prices for printing WEAA's pamphlets and suggested WEAA could contribute some sketches. WEAA

took up the offer and in a later letter of 30 August 1867 Hobson wrote that he was happy to have WEAA's article.[233]

He also seems to have entered the desirable business of reviewing, the bread- and-butter work of *New Grub Street*. In 1871 he spoke confidently to the editor of the *Dublin University Magazine* about getting reviews placed in local newspapers.

Alexander Ireland and the *Manchester Examiner*

Another newspaper editor, and a prestigious one, Alexander Ireland (1810-1894) corresponded with WEAA from 1868 through to 1892.

Ireland had followed his merchant father into business but was always drawn to intellectual circles. Business brought him to Manchester and in 1847 he became editor of the *Manchester Examiner*, a radical paper created in opposition to *Guardian* and for forty years its close rival. In 1886 the newspaper was sold off and soon folded.

Ireland had friends in eminent literary circles, Emerson, Hazlitt, Carlyle, and Leigh Hunt amongst them. He had been one of the original Manchester Free Library Committee members back in 1851 and donated many of

his books. Sadly, he had to sell off his rare book collection when the *Manchester Examiner* became unprofitable. He was a valuable mentor for WEAA, and their friendship was not disrupted when WEAA later joined the *Guardian* staff.

As with Richard Wright Procter and James Crossley, friendship with an older man of letters linked WEAA to another literary past. One of Ireland's proudest memories was his meeting with Sir Walter Scott in 1829, invited in by the great man himself when he turned up to view Scott's home of Abbotsford, 'with a courtesy that went to the heart of the young man.'[234]

The AP letters from Ireland are focused on literary topics but they are interspersed with invitations for visits and news of friends such as the radical Samuel Bamford. The first letter of 14 March 1868 is typically warm, 'I beg your acceptance of a little volume of mine – a kind of bibliographic tribute to the memory of two writers whose works are but little known to the current generation of readers.- Let me thank you for your unfailing courtesy and kindness in my researches in the Free Library

for which I am very grateful. I often see paragraphs of yours in “Notes and Queries” which I read with pleasure.’[235]

Ireland obviously saw WEAA as an exception to ‘the current generation of readers.’ Ireland’s invitation to WEAA to visit his house Alder Bank in Bowdon is in the next letter. It would have been very different from the houses WEAA was used to. Bibliographic and political sympathies crossed barriers.

WEAA on behalf of Trübner used the *Manchester Examiner* to clarify a complicated situation regarding the appeal for Strasbourg Library, destroyed during the Franco-Prussian War. Trübner could not represent himself as ‘politicians among my countrymen are angry with me for the steps I have taken.’[236]
WEAA’s letter appeared in the *Manchester Examiner* on 10 July 1872. Ireland took the trouble to inform him of it, writing from his holiday at St Bees.
Trübner gratefully commented that ‘it looks remarkably well done considering the short time you have had to do it.’[237] At this time WEAA was recuperating from illness in the Welsh hills. Earning the praise of such men, distinguished in their fields, enhanced WEAA’s reputation and led to further writing.
Recycling copy as usual, WEAA turned his letter into an article for the *Dublin University*

Magazine and into a pamphlet, *The Strassberg Library*. (There are various spellings used for the name.)

1867: Pamphlets and Booklets

The first reference to a pamphlet, WEAA's work on Trade Unionism, is in WEAA's letter to Alley in 1867. I suspect this may be *Co-operation and Partnerships of Industry,* published 1867. WEAA listed this with his other books and pamphlets in the back matter of *Annals of Manchester*.[238] If not, there is his later article on Trade Unions in the *1871 Companion to the British Almanac*. [239]

The second pamphlet is *The Name of God in 405 Languages*, printed in 1870 by Tubbs & Brook in Manchester and Trübner in London. [240] WEAA had some lengthy correspondence over this with Trübner, as well as debates in *N&Q*: it was a linguistically challenging topic. WEAA's introduction starts well with a humorous anecdote of the encounter between the philologist Louis Burger and a barber. Then WEAA discourses more uncomfortably on the lines of the cruel deities of savages and the Christian God of Love and Peace. He never was as crude as this again as his reading and thinking broadened. The *Phonetic Journal*

reviewer was very taken with the tiny size, '$2^{7/8}$ by $4^{1/2}$ inches', praising WEAA's 'painstaking compilation' as well as his 'pleasing introduction.'[241] The pamphlet is still picked up as a linguistic curiosity, most recently in an online blog.[242]

Nixon's Cheshire Prophecies[243] followed in 1873, enlarged as a new edition in 1878.[244] *N&Q* was a stimulating source for gathering scholarly information and comment.

In these early years, WEAA produced several pamphlets on tobacco, food reform, free speech, and statistics, most derived from articles or talks he had given. Some were self-published, some offprints from the societies, some published by Heywood and others, but how they originated is not an indication of their value. Some were substantial booklets rather than flimsy pamphlets. It is really the continuing references in AP, the number of reprints and new editions that denote relative importance. *Nixon's Cheshire Prophecies*, *Hints on the Formation of Small Libraries*,[245] *Juvenile Smoking*[246] and works on Lancashire folk speech, were WEAA's most widely read productions from this period.

1867: The Reliquary

Llewellynn Frederick William Jewitt (bap. 1816-1886) was the ultimate antiquarian, and his massive journal *The Reliquary* formed a virtual community of antiquarians. It was a serious achievement for WEAA when his first article was published in this prestigious journal.

The first letter from Jewitt dated 7 June 1867, is full of welcome for WEAA's offer of a paper and he continues to be enthusiastic when he receives it, writing that 'your highly interesting article is in the printer's hand.'[247]

Their correspondence provides a rare reference to WEAA's Thackeray Club. The much older and distinguished Jewitt accepts WEAA's invitation to be an honorary member with delight, mentioning lightly that he knew Thackeray before he became 'Mr Thackeray.'[248]

The July 1867 issue of *The Reliquary* opens with WEAA's *The Legend of the Disguised Knight*.[249] WEAA was characteristically generous in the article, referring to Jewitt's 'admirable and most valuable volume of Ballads and Songs of Derbyshire' as one of his

sources. There was an encouraging response to WEAA's article, resulting in a follow up article in July 1869 with his further discoveries of versions of the legend.[250] This first article from WEAA in the prestigious *The Reliquary* served to establish his reputation whilst the positive responses generated more material for WEAA to use. This would become a typical pattern in his work. The network proved fruitful.

There was wide interest in WEAA's inclusion of a medieval romance, *King Horn*, in his follow up article of *The Legend of the Disguised Knight.* Ellis took the trouble to send the preview copy to Furnivall, editor of the Early English Text Society. He enclosed Furnivall's reply. This may well be what Walmsley was referring to when he wrote this passage:

> 'Axon's critical acumen was observed very early in his career. In 1868 when Axon was 22 years old, F. J. Furnivall, the doyen of many learned societies, in a letter to Alexander J. Ellis, the philologist, on the publications of the Early English Text Society: "…Mr. Axon has hit on our one weak point. We have no man read in the

> Literature of Romances, Poems, &c., and we want sadly a trustworthy man on the subject…" and suggests that Axon should be that man.'[251]

WEAA continued to produce the occasional article for *The Reliquary*, reinforcing his reputation as a scholar. In 1868 and 1869 WEAA gave Jewitt his preliminary notes on the legend of Alderley Edge, a bibliographical list of John Harland's works, a lively piece on Bibliomania, the chilling story of *The Dead Lady's Ring* and a survey of public executions in Manchester, concluding as might be expected with a condemnation of capital punishment. WEAA's style is bright and confident with some hints of personal feelings.

Whether WEAA and Jewitt ever actually met is unclear. WEAA received invitations to visit Jewitt at Winster Hall, and he invited Jewitt to a party visiting Haddon Hall in June 1877, Jewitt replied that he was ill and unlikely to join them.

1870: Pot-Boilers

WEAA's friend John W Bone once requested that WEAA should send him 'some of your "pot boilers."'[252] This is a good example of how casual references in letters can become new leads. What might have Bone and WEAA considered to be his pot-boilers? WEAA never

wrote rubbish for popular gain, a strict definition of pot-boiler, but some works were certainly driven by commercial motive.

WEAA made an early advance into commercial writing through the London agent Trübner. In 1870 WEAA won a commission on Trübner's recommendation to assist an author in editing and expanding a work on the history of paper. WEAA worked hard on the contract, earning an initial fifty pounds and then a further twenty on completion. He used his contacts to solicit information. There is a letter, dated 1870, from his friend and regular reader at Campfield, Frank Spence of the Pendleton Alum Works, answering his query on carbonic paper, 'R Wedgewood 9 Cornhill London the only maker of really good carbonic paper, black sheets that I know of.'[253]

In 1871 WEAA directly approached Charles Knight, publisher of the *English Cyclopaedia*, proposing a twenty-two-page article on Free Libraries. The *English Cyclopaedia* had a worthy origin as the *Penny Cyclopaedia* of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, founded by WEAA's hero, Henry Brougham.

Many prestigious writers contributed to both

these publications. Charles Knight whose eyesight was failing handed WEAA over to a sub editor, the antiquarian and topographical writer, James Thorne.[254] Thorne's twelve letters to WEAA between 1871 and 1874 are all about WEAA's actual and proposed entries, largely related to social issues and politics, for *Companion to the Almanac,* really a supplement to the *English Cyclopaedia.*[255] This yearbook was also published by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. Thorne treated WEAA as a professional writer, commenting that he took much pleasure in his contributions and would keep his name to mind for future commissions. Amongst the topics WEAA proposed or covered are communism, 'a large subject' as Thorne warned,[256] the Paris Commune, cooperation, free libraries, folklore, patent law, socialism, trade unions and village communities.

The outcome of all this was at least nine very impressive articles in the *Companion to the Almanac* between 1869 and 1878. These long articles attest to WEAA's skill in digesting and communicating knowledge on any subject, and shed a rare light on his radical socialism, his technical understanding, and modernity. The

subjects are Free Libraries, ancient libraries, English guilds, learned societies, co-operative movements abroad, initiatives of employers and employees, patent specifications, Arabic numbers, and utilization of waste. He remained an occasional contributor – for example, with his expert *Local and Municipal Governments* (WEAA emphasised the right of women to vote in local elections) and the very entertaining *The Voice of Animals* in the 1885 edition.

Charles G Leland, the American journalist is now principally remembered as a folklorist. He may well have heard of WEAA through their mutual friend Trübner

and he certainly appreciated WEAA's ability to turn out articles on any subject, soliciting his contributions to *Chambers Cyclopaedia*. In 1875 he asked WEAA to find someone to write on 'Pneumatic Dispatch Tubes,' or if not, to do it himself. In real publisher style he added, 'I want the best article by the best man, but I must have one in New York by Nov.' He then requested this assortment, 'Will you in any case write Orphan,1600 words or less, and Places four or 500 words. Palm (a maximum) 200. Pantomime 800. And Papier Maché 800 or 1000.'[257] Leland was very sharp, advising WEAA to add the phrase "without deduction'

to his articles, ensuring he was paid the full amount even if the editor chopped the piece down.[258]

Although never a major part of WEAA's writing, he continued over the years to contribute to such reference resources, some paid and others, like the *OED*, a labour of love.

1871: *Dublin University Magazine*

The Dublin University Magazine warrants a specific mention. Not only was it a prestigious literary journal but it is the place where one of WEAA's most important works was published. This was on the occultist and adventurer, Cagliostro, a fantastical figure who entranced WEAA throughout his life. The *Dublin University Magazine* started life as a political journal, a vehicle for Anglo-Irish views, but by the time Sheridan Le Fanu became owner and editor in the 1860s it was very much a literary journal. It lasted altogether from 1833 to 1882. Frustratingly most of the content in the relevant volumes is anonymous and it is only through correspondence that WEAA's contributions can be verified. His articles in the *Dublin University Magazine* generated much praise, enabling identification of some of the

titles.

WEAA's articles were published in the *Dublin University Magazine* in the 1871-1873 period but after the promising start Adams' next three letters in 1873 are all concerned with Adams suddenly selling the journal to Durham Dunlop and wanting to ensure WEAA has been paid. Adams was apologetic, 'I must get you to forgive all my past sins so far as you are concerned on my promising to be a better boy in future.'[259] WEAA had encountered a colourful range of editors even at this early stage of his career.

References from Adams and other correspondents confirm five contributions from WEAA to the *Dublin University Magazine*, two on the evils of tobacco, one on Buddha, and a major one on Cagliostro. There are other articles in the same period that look very likely to be WEAA's: one a take on Islam and the other on household stories. In 1878 Sutton listed WEAA's articles in *Dublin University Magazine* as *Cagliostro*, *The Strassburg Library*, *A Looking Glass for Christians*, *Cyprian Folk Lore, Juvenile Smoking* and *Buddhism*, all around 1872 and 1873.[260] *A Looking Glass for*

Christians was reprinted in *The Academy*. The subject is a translated Chinese book that gives extraordinary interpretations of Western society. Some of the content, particularly the phrase 'John Chinaman,' now makes hard reading but WEAA goes beyond ridicule to serious debate of cultural perceptions and concludes fairly that, 'To attempt to criticize such a production would be a sheer waste of time, since in a literary country like China, national and religious prejudices (things not unknown amongst Western peoples) have succeeded in producing such a caricature we may well ask whether our own pictures of foreign lands and strange religions are to be relied on.' Certainly, this is one of WEAA's most intriguing and esoteric reviews. His style is rich, lively, and entertaining with felicitous phrases such as 'Necromancy is, however, rarely a blessing.'

Cagliostro

Out of all this, it is the Cagliostro work that is outstanding and, unusually for the journal, the author's name is given. WEAA had a lifelong obsession with Cagliostro, using the pages of *N&Q* and his circle of friends for information. William Bates, a well-known antiquarian, was

one of the AP correspondents. He took the trouble to send WEAA Cagliostro material, mentioning he was looking forward to the *Dublin University Magazine* article and thanking him for the reprint of *The Disguised Knight*.

As late as 1910 WEAA returned to Cagliostro in his review of a new study by W R H Trowbridge.[261] WEAA commented rather sharply of this newcomer that, 'Mr. Trowbridge claims, but surely without any just reason, to be the first who has treated the subject "honestly." Yet few who have waded through the welter of books and pamphlets about Cagliostro in English, French, German, Italian, Dutch, and Latin will think Carlyle's estimate dishonest or differ greatly from the judgement there recorded.'[262]

WEAA had ploughed through mountains of material for his study, published in eight sections in Volumes 78 and 79 of the *Dublin University Magazine*, totalling eight-four action packed pages.

Cagliostro, or, the Life of a Charlatan is one of the best pieces WEAA ever wrote, a scintillating, picaresque account of Cagliostro's tricks and travels across Europe in the

eighteenth century. It is light, colourful, and fast paced with quick captures of character, dialogue, and scene. This is dramatic not antiquarian writing. It is both authentic history and a thrilling tale. WEAA fulfils the promise of his opening, 'Foremost amongst the charlatans, who in the eighteenth century traded on the mingled superstition and unbelief of the age, stands the figure of Cagliostro, the most magnificent and successful-as conjuror, mesmerist, alchemist, pseudo-prophet, and, wonder-worker-of all his compeers, perhaps of all countries and of all ages. Flashing from town to town, from country to country, he traversed Europe, finding dupes in every land.' [263]

T T Wilkinson wrote to WEAA in October 1871 to praise his two articles, the one on tobacco, and the first episode of Cagliostro, 'I think your articles racy and good, and fancy I can detect a slight imitation of Carlyle in two or three places. Am I right?'[264] WEAA was brilliant at different styles and pastiches of authors or genres, and he admired Carlyle, referencing him in *Cagliostro*. But the tale and the fascination are all his own.

1871: Translations

As he learnt different languages, WEAA was drawn to translate or adapt poems and stories, a happy relaxation that continued all his life. His translations regularly featured in journals like the *VM*. Collections of his translated verse found appreciative audiences and went into several editions. His translations first appeared in print around 1871.

From 1871 onwards WEAA contributed the occasional poem, story or moral musing to *The Band of Hope Treasury*, the journal of the Temperance Society. Some of these were adapted from the French or German and he signed them as WEAA. WEAA's very first published translation, a short story, might be *The Snow-Flake*, which he translated from the German for inclusion in *The Band of Hope Treasury* in 1871.[265]

He made use of his knowledge of foreign newspapers, first developed at Campfield, to suggest to the editor of the *Academy* that he could usefully supply notes from analysing foreign newspapers. He made this ploy in 1875 when he was already established as a reviewer for the *Academy*. French was covered but the editor was very happy to expand this,

with WEAA's assistance, to Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish papers. Keeping an eye on foreign papers became part of his remit at the *Guardian* so altogether this was a neat manoeuvre by WEAA.

WEAA played with the difficult puzzle of translation all his life: like most translators he was aware of the dichotomy of adaptation and literal rendering. He also spotted a need that I doubt anyone else has pointed out, before or since. Translations of foreign literature, lie buried without 'the faintest clue' in other works: WEAA proposed an index to identify these.[266]

1874: Nixon, the Wizard and Mother Shipton

WEAA was greatly attracted to three legendary figures in this period: two from Cheshire and one from Yorkshire. Nixon has already been mentioned with WEAA's pamphlet of 1873 and revised edition of 1878. *The Wizard of Alderley Edge* appeared in *The Reliquary* in 1869 and then as a revised version in his *Cheshire Gleanings* in 1884.[267] The article is full of fascinating and wonderful tales, starting with the Wizard and finishing with world legends of the sleeping figure in the cave that have enthralled listeners across the ages, from

Persia through to Denmark. WEAA's imagination illuminates the text: there is delightful story telling as well as easy communication of scholarly knowledge. But it is the encounter of the Mobberley Farmer and the Enchanter that stays with the reader.

Nixon, the Cheshire prophet, has faded away despite WEAA's efforts. However, both the Wizard of Alderley Edge and Mother Shipton should be grateful to him for the continuation of their fame and for the streams of curious visitors that still seek them out. WEAA's investigations reawakened curiosity in his time and since then his gleanings have resurfaced in various modern publications. Both his article on the Wizard and his book of Mother Shipton's prophecies contain much of the matter that has since fed into various retellings.

A reference to Mrs Banks in WEAA's introduction to *Mother Shipton* as well as his own list in *Stray Chapters* date the publication to 1874 or later.[268] Like *Nixon's Cheshire Prophecies* the book was published by Abel Heywood but there is little information about it and WEAA was not named. It was not reprinted until modern times and without acknowledgement of his editorial role. WEAA's introduction to the prophecies is erudite and entertaining, especially in the descriptions of the depictions of the old lady from wax, paintings, carvings in stone and ivory, to engravings of her in a chariot drawn

by a stag and finishing with the Mother Shipton moth. The anecdote of Mrs. Banks and the ancient painting she discovered that then vanished is a gem. WEAA brings Mother Shipton to life and stimulates curiosity but is nevertheless happy to expose those who have fallen for or manufactured associated tricks and hoaxes, 'That Mr. Hindley was not the first to credit Mother Shipton with predictions of which she was quite innocent is evident from an anecdote told by an anonymous correspondent of *Notes and Queries*.'

All three topics were naturally prime *N&Q* fare and WEAA certainly found help in its pages for all three legendary figures. It would seem too that Heywood pushed the three works as a package: one edition of *Nixon's Cheshire Prophecies* was advertised in *Mother Shipton* as 'Uniform with Mother Shipton's Prophecies' as well as having 'an Appendix containing the Legend of Alderley Edge, &c.'

1875: Arabic Studies

James Allanson Picton, the eminent Liverpool architect and antiquarian, was surprised to find he and WEAA had separately followed the same lines of inquiry and arrived at the same conclusions, 'It is rather singular that our

researches should carry back the introduction of the Arabic numeracy to the same year 1275.'[269] WEAA had zoned in on Arabic numbers on a church bell and in a manuscript, alerting the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society to his find.

WEAA's paper *Arabic Numbers*, published in 1875 in the *Companion to the British Almanac*, was an early manifestation of his fascination with the stories, poetry, coins, numbers, and religion of Arabia. Later in 1888, his essay, *The Significance of Kufic Coins in Northumbria*, was much acclaimed when it appeared in a book edited by T Tindall Wildridge. Wildridge had been keen to persuade WEAA to contribute to *Northumbria,* was delighted by the essay and gave WEAA free reprints.[270] Studying eastern cultures might advance ideas for temperance and vegetarianism, and WEAA followed these lines too. He may have learnt something of Arabic through a tutor, Kevor H Zorian. Yet there is a sense that all these strange countries, places, and peoples were of a story book nature to him. He was uncertain when F W Newman tried to make him confront the reality of General Gordon's brutality towards the Arabs. But within the

safe confines, WEAA did explore new territory.

Major and Minor

In 1878 WEAA received a testimonial from MLC and the Manchester Statistical Society (MSS). The printed report of the ceremony includes a list by Sutton of WEAA's 'more important works.' Sutton understandably excluded 'many of his minor pamphlets and articles.'[271] The list is still impressive. As well as the articles in *The Reliquary* and *Dublin University Magazine*, Sutton detailed articles published in the *Co-operator*, *St. James's Magazine*, *Churchman's Family Magazine*, *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*, *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, *Quarterly Journal of Science*, *Food Journal,* and the *Academy*. Sutton included librarianship works, the little book of *Nixon's Cheshire Prophecies* and an impressive roll call of the journals and newspapers that held further minor works. WEAA, the anti-smoking campaigner, even wrote two articles for *Cope's Tobacco Plant*, promoted by his friend John Fraser in Liverpool, employed as an editor by the famous Cope's company.[272]

Quantity is not, of course, necessarily quality but WEAA was the consummate professional writer. The supposed 'pot-boilers', for instance, are impressive both for the depth of research and the

clarity with which WEAA presents his subjects. As his reputation grew, WEAA was approached to act as editor, both for journals and books. In a few years he had come far.

CHAPTER 8

A NOTABLE SOCIETY ENTHUSIAST

Societies
Victorians had a passion for societies and clubs: they abound in every sphere. Appearing on club lists, adorning personal names with membership abbreviations gave status. WEAA was a serial joiner of clubs, ranging across arts, sciences, linguistics, and reform. He was proud to be a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, adding the letters FRSL to his name on publications.

Alan J Kidd's paper on the middle-class societies of North-West England is a rich survey of the complex histories and cultural impact of the societies, particularly as regards local history studies. There are two references to WEAA, the first as an example of the 'notable society enthusiasts,' listing his membership in 1884 for at least seven local societies. In describing the 'more severely cerebral' activities of the Liverpool based Historic Society, Kidd includes a mention of the papers delivered in 1886, 'last but not least the indomitable W. E. A. Axon speculated on Shakespeare's dark lady of Gawsworth.'[273]

Manchester teemed with societies of all descriptions. One Lord Mayor, Thomas H.

Adams, commented wryly at the centenary of the VS, ‘Manchester has been the birth-place of many Causes and Movements, some of which have flourished with world-wide effect; others have died at birth: others have died in middle-age or through senility.’[274] WEAA experienced and chronicled many such rises, flourishings and falls.

WEAA’s Membership

WEAA’s contemporaries balked at pinning down all the societies he belonged to, ‘the width of his range will be sufficiently indicated by the following list of societies, to which he has contributed, namely, the Royal Society of Literature, the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, the Statistical Societies of London and Manchester, the British Association, the Library Association, the Manchester Literary Club, the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, the Manchester Field Naturalists' Society, the Manchester Scientific Students' Association, the Manchester Botanists' Association, the Cryptogrammic Society, the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, and many others.’[275]

There were indeed ‘many others.’ He joined the Phonetic Society in

1869. He was founder member and President of the Manchester Eclectic Society in 1872 and in the same year became a member of the Manchester Scientific and Mechanical Society. It is likely he was a founding member of the Manchester Ruskin Society in 1879, later known as the Ruskin Society. He was Secretary of the Manchester Art Museum (Ancoats Museum) and on the Queens Park Museum Committee. His good friend Louis Casartelli, Bishop of Salford, was a founder member of the Manchester Geographical Society, the Manchester Oriental Society, and the Manchester Egyptian Society. WEAA joined these. Both he and Casartelli were amongst the founders of the Manchester Dante Society. There are no pre-1904 records for the Chetham Society but WEAA was admitted between 1883-1888. WEAA joined the Folklore Society in 1878 although he seems never to have paid his subscription. He became a member of the Gypsy Lore Society in its founding year, 1888.

There were innumerable reform groups where WEAA was a familiar and welcome figure. WEAA joined the Manhood Suffrage League in 1865 and the Vegetarian Society in 1868. He was Secretary for the Manchester and Salford Sunday Society, leading the 1877 campaign. He was at the forefront of the temperance movement, signing the pledge in 1867 and then joining the UK Alliance (founded in Manchester in 1853), and the Independent Order of Good Templars (IOGT). He became the Hon. Worthy Deputy Chief Templar in 1886 and remained so to his death.[276]

His friend Charles Rowley founded the Ancoats Brotherhood in 1878, roping WEAA in from the start. In 1889 he became Vice

President of the English Anti-Tobacco Society, was a member of Anti-Caste, of the National Anti-Vivisection Society, and joined the new Humanitarian League in 1897. He joined the International Brotherhood in 1901, becoming President and Vice-President from 1901 to his death. He was Chair, and virtually the 'working President' from 1903 to 1907.[277]

London based societies such as the Folklore Society held less attraction for northern scholars. There could be power struggles in national societies between the north and London: this was the case with the LA. The VS had its roots and headquarters in Manchester, causing southern resentment, whilst the troubled English Dialect Society moved from Oxford to Manchester and then to Cambridge, leaving its library at MCL. There could also be splits between Liverpool and Manchester as happened with the LA Library Assistants Association. WEAA, respected as a peacemaker, smoothed down many conflicts.

WEAA spent most of his life in Manchester and naturally gravitated towards the city's societies. When WEAA lived in other districts, he adapted the same pattern of enthusiastic involvement. He was on the Salford School Board, the Salford Temperance Union, served briefly as a Moss Side councillor, and was chair of the Moss Side Library Committee. When he moved to Southport in 1906, he was soon active in the Southport Literary and Philosophical Society, Southport Food Reform and had a seat on the Atkinson Library Committee. As detailed later, he was awarded honorary corresponding positions with two societies in the USA and one in Venezuela.

Spiritual Home

Membership of so many societies may seem excessive, but the networks provided WEAA, coming as he did from an uncertain

background, with spiritual homes. Pragmatically it was the milieu where he would make the right contacts. In Manchester the learned societies were dominated by an elite group, probably no more than fifty men, who were 'highly influential in the running of the city.' [278]

Even with his tight finances, membership of societies was a priority for WEAA. Fortunately, subscriptions were generally on the low side although WEAA's friends, John Bone and T T Wilkinson, both advised against the Historical Society as not being worth the cost. Some societies were especially valuable to WEAA as they extended his networks nationally and even internationally. The RSL and the LA are prime examples.

Belonging

WEAA was an active member in his key societies, variously taking on roles of secretary, treasurer, speaker, editor, librarian, vice-president and even president. He was the person frequently called upon for help, and he rarely refused. There are several references to his tasks such as sorting out the books and papers for the MSS in 1870 and 1871.[279] Even years later, he could be relied upon for prompt action. In 1907 A P Whitehead, having asked WEAA to sort out a tricky situation at MLC, commented, 'It was a load off my mind when I saw you turn up at the meeting.'[280] He was a useful man to know, holding

together the threads of multiple contacts. WEAA could magic a piano for the Manchester Welsh Society by briefly borrowing one from the VS. Let down by guest speakers at a VS dinner, Edwin Collier appealed to WEAA for suggestions 'to any stray big bird we could catch.' [281]

Terry Wyke described WEAA's lively time at the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. He produced twelve short papers on such topics as Pascal's possible invention of the wheelbarrow, the seagull in Salford, a mediaeval bell with Arabic numbers, names of colour, and the pronunciation of 'deaf mutes' who had been taught to articulate. There is also his fascinating account *On the Numerical Extent of Personal Vocabularies*.[282] Using the test developed by a Professor E. S. Holden, WEAA estimated his own vocabulary as 35,250 and his old friend J J Alley's as 37,000. WEAA relished the Society's 'pleasant old-fashioned flavour' and the cups of tea with conversation that preceded the formal meetings.[283]

Perhaps there was a personal need to belong to such groups and to be useful to them. There

are parallels in WEAA's life with his contemporary, the chemist Edward Frankland, once professor at Owens. Like WEAA, Frankland was illegitimate, born to a maid servant made pregnant by the son of the family. Frankland's biographer debated whether this stigma drove him to establish himself in the world of professional bodies, 'Then there was, in most professional groups at least, a strong sense of corporate identity, and this touched a nerve very deep in Frankland's personality.'[284] This may well have been true for WEAA. Both men would have belonged to some of the same societies in Manchester.

The Three Most Significant

Out of all WEAA's societies, the LCAS, MLC, and the VS were perhaps closest to his heart. They ticked all the boxes. All three provided happy social gatherings with congenial company, such as Christmas dinners with the MLC, expeditions with the LCAS, and Summer Schools with the VS. All three in their different ways related to WEAA's loves of literature and local history. WEAA achieved a special status within these societies and there was deep affection for him as well as admiration. As a founder member of LCAS, WEAA had the privilege of proposing the organisation's name, and apart from some attempts to change it in the 1950s, this has remained ever since.

WEAA's address to LCAS annual meeting, 25 January 1889, is a fascinating exploration of scope of antiquarian study, especially in the

local context, ‘I think our own locality, Lancashire and Cheshire, and even the more restricted district around Manchester, is one, if it be not paradoxical to say it, that affords special facilities and special opportunities for antiquarian study. Manchester, as a community, covers the whole space of English civilisation and English history.’ WEAA had the foresight to argue that the neglected history of manufacture, machinery and commerce should be a focus for LCAS, ‘that recruits itself very largely from the commercial community.’[285] This unusual view influenced the future direction of LCAS. WEAA may have looked like an ancient scholar, but his mind was open to the modern. [286]

In 1877 WEAA was included in a long verse, *Our Folk*, comically celebrating the MLC members. The author was ‘One of ‘Em’ and it was for private circulation only. This is the couplet for WEAA,

‘And Axon, who was born on a library shelf
And has grown from a book to a library itself.’[287]

Even in his last years when WEAA grew too ill to fulfil all his commitments, he remained in post to his death as a member of

MLC, council member of the LCAS (where he had been President and Vice-President) and President of the VS.

The family have preserved this photograph of the MLC Committee in 1888: WEAA is the frail figure sitting on the right.

Family Affairs

In the formative period of 1863 to 1874, WEAA became a familiar face on the literary,

scholarly, library, and reform circuits. In some cases, WEAA was in at the beginning. He set up his own Thackeray Club: there are references to this in the AP but little else is known. He always urged inclusion of women, unsuccessfully in the case of MLC. With WEAA as a founder member of LCAS it is not surprising women were admitted as members. The wording for LCAS membership echoes that of WEAA's hero, Henry Brougham's phrase that led later to much legalistic and suffragist debate, 'In these rules, the masculine shall include the female gender.'[288]

Although many societies debarred women as members, others provided WEAA with an environment he delighted in sharing with his family. Both Jane and his second wife, Setta, were active in the VS as well as in other cultural and reform enterprises. Kitty joined the LCAS a year before her death in 1890. WEAA's research, publishing, and society activities formed the family business, and his children were regularly called upon. He wrote to his good friend Alley in July 1880 explaining he was sending Sophie to copy an extract on hardening of glass from 'Pancrolles History of Lost Arts,' 'If you will get her the

book & find a corner where she can sit & write I shall be obliged.'[289] This would have been for his Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society paper on toughened glass.

A few weeks later he appealed to Alley again. He was delayed in Edinburgh at a Temperance gathering but had forgotten he was due to give a lecture on *The Founder of Buddhism* at Holy Innocents, Fallowfield. With Credland's help, he managed to get a note to Alley, asking him to retrieve the notes and read the lecture, thus avoiding 'an awful scrape.' WEAA added, 'Will you kindly represent me & take Sophie with you so that the house of Axon may be represented to a certain extent.'[290]

Ernest and his son Geoffrey followed WEAA into several of the societies, the LA, LCAS and VS being prominent. Like WEAA, both Ernest and Geoffrey, contributed papers to *The Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*. Ernest, like WEAA became president, and all three were lifelong LCAS Council members. All three served terms as editors of the *VM*.

Then there was the Manchester Crichton Club.

Manchester Crichton Club

The Manchester Crichton Club was founded in 1858 and reorganised in 1863. Its history is found mainly in its own pages. According to the narrators in the 1866 annual, the dissatisfied and intelligent youths from ‘a large Congregational establishment in this city’ marched from ‘the maternal halls in which they had so long sheltered, and - engaged a cellar.’ The cellar is described as a ‘(s)coalastic’ curiosity with a mysterious signboard, depictions of a black Greek slave, an aged Queen of Sheba, ‘a dwarfed Achilles with a club-foot’, and ‘a remarkable glass case, the contents of which remain to this day an impenetrable mystery.’

Ernest believed WEAA joined the Manchester Crichton Club around 1864 and that he was involved in its re-organisation. Ernest described it as ‘a literary or mutual improvement society, consisting of a number of young fellows of literary tastes. The Manchester Crichton Club had a great share in WEAA’s intellectual development.’ [291] The Club provided WEAA with older mentors too.

In 1884 WEAA looked back with fondness at the youngsters who had flourished in the Manchester Crichton Club, especially a friend of more than twenty years who died in 1881 at the age of thirty-six, Joseph Mowbray Hawcroft. WEAA wrote of his fellow members, ‘These youngsters in 1865 and 1866 published Annuals containing, in spite of obvious juvenility, some notable work in prose and verse.’[292]

The Manchester Crichton Club has the distinction of being the first of the many societies that WEAA joined. As well as Hawcroft, at least three others of WEAA's youthful friends were 'Critchety Crichtonians.'[293] These were Robert Ferguson of the Free Library, Fred J Faraday, and William Pownall, 'a curious art designer,'[294] already mentioned as the son of WEAA's adopted maternal uncle.

The members produced manuscript magazines, only two of which survive, one for 1864 and the other undated. They printed two annuals in 1865 and 1866. The MCLA copies of the two manuscripts and the two annuals are unique survivals, probably donated by WEAA. According to Walmsley three annuals were printed but WEAA only referred to two. WEAA credited Hawcroft with much of the editorial work and for arranging for the first volume to be printed at the Barnsley Chronicle Office.

WEAA's poem *Reminiscences* appeared in the 1864 manuscript magazine and was reprinted in the 1866 annual. There are more of his poems and long prose pieces in both the 1865 and 1866 annuals, all experiments in different styles.

Mention has already been made of WEAA's humorous sketches in the Crichton annuals, some entered under the ironic pseudonyms of 'F. D'A ' and 'Fred D'Armytage'. His delight in

parody and literary jesting is apparent in his pieces *Declined With Thanks* written with William Pownall in the 1865 annual, and *Miss Atkinson's Album* in the 1866 annual.

Producing good parodies depends upon appreciating the originals and WEAA clearly was immersed in all sorts of reading from pulp papers to verses in albums. In *Chetham's College* in the 1865 annual, WEAA imitated rather than parodied Harrison Ainsworth or Dickens with his ghostly figures in Manchester streets. The piece also foreshadows WEAA's fascination with the mysteries of charlatans as well as his habit of including lengthy quotations. He ends with a joke against himself, 'Instead of a concise historical account of Chetham's College, I have filled my pages with drivel and gossip, such as a hundred years hence will be fashionable about our Free Trade Hall, Athenaeum, and Free Library.'

Change for Sixpence in the 1866 annual, is equally intriguing, a tale based on WEAA's knowledge of journals, including pulp magazines that, as he comments, would be unlikely to be found in the BML. The scene is

set in Angel Court, Ancoats. As well as demonstrating WEAA's expertise in street literature, the piece is startling in WEAA's unconcern at his surroundings. Ancoats was one of the grimmest slum districts of Manchester. WEAA, whose childhood was partially spent in an Ancoats workshop, was not fazed by this, judging by the description in *Change for Sixpence*. In fact, he takes an unusually cheery view of the aristocracy of house-dwellers and their early morning chat with the emerging denizens of the cellars. He ended the piece with a conventional expression of distaste for such pulp literature but the enthusiasm with which he described some of the content is telling. WEAA cannot but be fascinated by literature, even as low as this.

Ernest Jones (1819-1869)

The revival of the Manchester Crichton Club formed a literary bridge across the generations. The older figures included Ernest Jones, the Chartist leader, as president, John Cobley, a published author, as vice-president, and the Rev Joseph Parker of Cavendish Chapel, Manchester. Their works were advertised in the annuals. Ernest Jones has a

page to himself, headed with a warning quotation from the *Morning Chronicle* of 3 January 1856 to the effect that while Jones' extreme political opinions might not be to everyone's tastes, his poetry is exemplary. There is a mention of the Manchester Crichton Club in *A Life of Ernest Jones,* but it is very sparse, only detailing that Jones was president 'for a considerable number of years.'[295]

WEAA's friendship with Ernest Jones may have started through radical politics or through the Manchester Crichton Club. After the failure of the Chartists, Ernest Jones founded the Manhood Suffrage Movement in 1858 whose programme led very much to the Reform Bill of 1867. WEAA was an active member: as previously described, he corresponded with E Hobson, of the *Ashton and Stalybridge Reporter* on the chances of recruiting in Ashton.[296] Hobson enclosed his payment for the League which suggests WEAA was an active organiser, perhaps the secretary, as he often was in various societies. Ernest Jones was a major influence on WEAA both in politics and literature. It is likely that Ernest Jones inspired WEAA to try his hand at translating poetry. WEAA even named his son

Ernest after his admired friend. In fact 'Ernest' became a popular name in Manchester. Ironically, although the name Ernest Jones suggests a plain working man, the Chartist leader came from 500 years of pure aristocratic lineage and he was named after his godfather, that dreadful reactionary the Duke of Cumberland, King Ernest 1 of Hanover.

There are four letters from Ernest Jones to WEAA. They are formal as letters tended to be at the time but affectionate in tone. In the first letter dated 1 August 1865, Ernest Jones praised WEAA's 'literary abilities, and attainments.' [297] A remarkable compliment to a youth of nineteen. Yet as WEAA remarked, Ernest Jones 'had always a kind word for literary aspirants.'[298]
It is again the sketch in *Biograph and Review* that gives a rare statement of WEAA's political commitments. Surely this is WEAA's voice, 'It will be seen that the greater part of Mr. Axon's life has been spent in literary pursuits. He has often expressed an opinion that all men should acknowledge the claims of citizenship by a certain amount of attention to public questions. He was an active member of the

committee formed by the late Mr. Ernest Jones, Mr E. O. Greening, and other Radicals, whose work commenced the agitation leading to the passing of the last Reform Bill. Since then he has not taken any active share in party politics, but has shown a keen interest in those social questions which are gradually coming to the front.'[299]

Jospeh Mowbray Hawcroft (1845-1881)
WEAA's memorial article of his dear friend, Joseph Mowbray Hawcroft, stands as a poignant record of these young aspiring Crichtonians, exhausted by long hours in warehouses, offices, or workshops. Some went on 'to achieve a certain distinction in literature and in art' but disease, probably consumption, claimed Hawcroft.

Originally from Barnsley, after a commercial education, the fifteen year old Hawcroft became an apprentice in a warehouse on Fountain Street, leaving in 1875 to work in Abel Heywood and Son's publishing firm, 'where he found a channel for the literary and commercial ability which he certainly possessed.' Desperate ill health doomed him: winters were hard, and he was consumed by dark moods, 'the Horatian spectre – the black care which rides even behind the horseman.'[300] WEAA, as in other of his accounts of distressed friends, treats

Hawcroft's mental agonies with sensitive sympathy, understanding why trivial incidents could rapidly swing him from exuberance to gloom. He used the article, as surely Hawcroft would have wanted, to gives extracts from his poems and an outline of his writing career. This is illuminating for Hawcroft followed the same well-trodden paths as WEAA and others of the Manchester Crichton Club.

Like WEAA, Hawcroft published poems and literary articles in newspapers, and in hospitable periodicals, amongst which WEAA usefully identifies '*Cassell's Magazine, The Broadway, The London Magazine, The Shilling Magazine, The People's Magazine, The Churchman's Shilling Magazine, The Sixpenny Magazine, the St. James's Magazine, The Day of Rest*' as well as Manchester journals, the *Sphinx,* and the *Shadow.* Hawcroft published critical essays in the *Social Reformer* but was less proficient with fiction in WEAA's view, a poor fiction writer himself. WEAA also noted Hawcroft's contributions to Heywood's annuals of 1870 and 1871, *Christmas Budget* and *The Old Sparrow Hawk*, and later to Ben Brierley's annuals of 1876 and 1878 and *Ben Brierley's Journal* where he was known as

Dalton Mowbray, sadly adopting the name of a dead brother. Hawcroft was one of nine brothers: seven died before him.

It was hard for WEAA to write objectively of this friend of his youth with whom he had shared the love of literature, 'I who write cannot pretend to be uninfluenced in what I may say by the friendship that subsisted between us for more than twenty years, and by ties of sympathy that bound us together during the whole period of hi literary career.'

Manchester Eclectic Society

As Walmsley said, 'It was fitting that a man of such wide interests should be President of the Manchester Eclectic Society.'[301] The *Guardian* report of the Inaugural meeting on 11 June 1872 summed up the principles as follows, 'Mr. R. S. Chrystal, the secretary, stated that the Society was formed in April, and that its object was the consideration of all subjects, with a view to the discovery and elucidation of truth. It was entirely unsectarian. The only qualification of membership was an unblemished character, and a willingness to comply with the regulations of the Society. The bond of union amongst the members would not be coincidence of opinion, but sincerity in the pursuit of truth. Ladies are admissible as members of the Society.'[302] The whole statement bears WEAA's stamp, particularly in promoting tolerance of

different views and ensuring women were admitted as members.

The economist William Stanley Jevons was involved in the Manchester Eclectic Society. In a letter to WEAA dated 16 June 1871, he discussed how the various papers might be organised, suggesting to WEAA that he should take this on and become the Hon. Librarian. [303] There are only a few survivals of the papers.

There is an Eclectic Society fragment in AP, attached accidentally to the rules of another of WEAA's organizations, the Manchester, Salford and District Temperance Electoral Association. [304] This has preserved the list of Eclectic officers, WEAA being President and Council member, as well as the agenda for 1873, covering housing, spiritualism, morals, Irish Home Rule and 'Truth.' The title page of WEAA's pamphlet, *A Plea for Free Speech,* describes it as the address he delivered at the inaugural meeting of the Manchester Eclectic Society on 11 June 1872. This is a remarkably passionate paper. WEAA warned that it is dangerous to be complacent and to believe all the restrictions are in the past. He reminded

his audience of the persecutions that Samuel Bamford suffered, not so long ago. The paper represents one of the earliest expressions of WEAA's hatred for slavery, his admiration for the abolitionists, for those who spoke out, including a printer, of whom he says, 'probably not one Englishman in a hundred ever heard the name of Elijah Lovejoy.'[305]

Another pamphlet from a talk WEAA gave at the Manchester Eclectic Society aroused wide debate. This was WEAA's *The Future of the English Language An Argument for Spelling Reform*.[306] As WEAA explained, much of the paper was first delivered as the Presidential Address on 3 April 1873 to the Manchester Eclectic Society. It was then published in the *Quarterly Journal of Science*, July 1873 before appearing as a pamphlet published by Pitman.

It is a remarkable paper, with WEAA reviewing the concept of universal languages, the status of English as a possible language for science, and the need if English were to become global to have a better means of teaching through phonetics. Perceptively WEAA analysed the advantages of English as a business language. In his postscript he

mentioned that the paper had been reviewed by *Nature* and there was agreement with the likelihood of English becoming the language of science. WEAA encapsulated brilliantly the topics which were of burning interest at the time and continue even into the 21st century with the conflicts over phonetics in primary education. WEAA's intelligence, learning, and imaginative ideas illuminate the pamphlet. It is a perfect expression of his linguistic expertise combined with his drive for humanity to communicate and connect.

The Manchester Eclectic Society survived at least to 1885 when Harry Rawson wanted to borrow WEAA's notes for a paper he was due to deliver to the Eclectic. Rawson was to speak on 'George Eliot's questionable union with Lewes.'[307]

The Royal Society of Literature

Isabel Quigly, a historian of the RSL, was scathing about the mediocre antiquarians, clerics, and noblemen who formed the early membership and the dry subjects they wrote about, if they wrote at all.[308] It was only in the twentieth century that real literary names appeared. But in WEAA's antiquarian circles there was huge prestige in being elected to the

RSL. Founded by a bishop in 1820, the RSL was at that stage antiquarian rather than literary in focus. In 1868 WEAA became a member, quite a wonderful step for a twenty-two year old provincial writer. He had certainly established a reputation through *N&Q* and the *Reliquary* but without sponsorship it would have been difficult to gain admittance to this elite London body. It was his friend John W Bone who proposed WEAA to the RSL. WEAA was concerned that he would be rejected but Bone assured him that this was highly unlikely. Bone also reassured WEAA that there would not be another fee to pay on top of the subscription. WEAA was dealing with tight finances.

It was the links through libraries, other societies, as well as his research and writing, that gained WEAA the RSL votes at such a young age. WEAA had won the respect of some pre-eminent scholars, resulting in his participation in their research. *N&Q* and membership of the RSL enabled him now to reach beyond local fame even when he had rarely set foot outside Manchester and its environs.

As soon as WEAA was elected he started adding the letters FRSL to his name, a common practice that writers delighted in. He wasted no time either in proposing papers to the Society. Several were accepted over the years and when WEAA could not attend friends read them out on his behalf. In his letter of 20 January 1870 Bone reported what happened with WEAA's very first paper on King Horn when William Sandys Wright Vaux, better known as Vaux of the Coins, mistakenly thought Bone had asked him to read it out. He did so but also selected portions and added his own comments. He then returned it to Bone to finish as he could not cope with WEAA's handwriting, 'your thin handwriting being a great problem to his bad sight.'[309]

Having become a Fellow at the age of twenty-two, WEAA remained one all his life. Across the forty-five years, he contributed eighteen papers in total and was remembered with awe on his death by the Vice-President Sir Edward Bradbrook, 'Such a range in literature, bibliography, and folk-lore is not often compassed in the studies of a single individual. Like many other scholars, and unlike some, he was generous in imparting his

knowledge to those who sought his help, and was attractive in his conversation.'[310] As Walmsley pointed out, the Vice-President gave fifty lines to WEAA's obituary, and a mere four lines for three other recently deceased members.

John W Bone (1828-1895)

There is not sufficient space to scrutinise the many individuals who figured in WEAA's networks. However, it is worth noting the friendship with John W Bone. He is valuable for the rich content of his AP correspondence, the impact he had on WEAA's career by introducing him to the RSL, and for the glimpses he affords into WEAA's personal life. He was perhaps the most significant friend that WEAA made through *N&Q*. Bone's detailed letters over the years provide a rare commentary on WEAA: he touched on sensitive topics such as WEAA's longing for a degree. WEAA became properly acquainted with John Bone through *N&Q* although he may have met him first at Campfield on one of Bone's frequent visits to Manchester. Their correspondence suggests that Bone, a solitary man, found comfort with the Axon family, visiting them regularly. He appreciated their

kindness in creating a scrapbook for his sister, bringing her much pleasure. It says much of WEAA's personality that a very private man trusted him, although so much younger, with personal confidences.

Bone was born in Salford into an old Catholic line and educated at London University. His brother Richard was a priest, and his sister a nun at Newcastle. As detailed in Bone's letters to WEAA, his knowledge of Spanish led him to be an examiner in Dublin on behalf of the University College London and he then became secretary of the Consolidated Bank, London. Thomas Costley described his 'fastidious taste and retiring disposition' and through *N&Q* his 'extensive correspondence with his brother antiquaries, especially on matters relating to the Mediaeval Church and to Lancashire archaeology.'[311]

Touchingly, Bone frequently expressed his admiration for the younger man's achievements. WEAA regretted his lack of a degree, but Bone was definite that this had done WEAA no harm. In one letter Bone recommends Latin and English language courses for WEAA, strongly advising him not

to take on a degree, ‘If you take my decided advice you won't study for A Degree: you may spend your time & brains much more sensibly, healthily & happily.’ Bone greatly praises WEAA but still suggests he could benefit from the two formal courses, especially if mixing with other students, ‘I do not know any from which with your literary tastes, your ability, growth of mind & facile pen, you will derive so much lasting intellectual & aesthetic benefit as from those two.’[312]

Bone often reflected on how little he has accomplished in comparison to WEAA, ‘I quite agree with you that you have done a fair share of work for one so young. You make me feel my own shortcomings. You were born after I went to college & I feel my satisfactory work by the side of yours is nil & nowhere.’[313] This was written in 1872. WEAA’s ability to have several works on the go all at once astounded Bone as it did other friends.

As usual with bibliophiles, the fate of a deceased friend’s library was of prime importance. When Bone died in Southport, his collection was sold off, probably to the bookseller Richard Sutton, brother to Charles Sutton, but four years later Casartelli was wondering what had become of his letter books. They would have recorded a dense history of Victorian scholarship.

CHAPTER 9

LANCASHIRE FOLK AND LANCASHIRE LORE

Folklore and *N&Q*

William Thoms, founder of *N&Q*, is credited with coining the much debated term 'Folk-Lore.' WEAA was from the first fascinated by folklore. His article on Thoms' term represent one of the clearest descriptions of a sprawling subject.[314]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the folklorists became scientific in approach, categorising the variations in tales, songs, and beliefs across the world. WEAA provides a link between two phases, the pioneering work of collection and imaginative debate, and the later period of more rigorous examination. He was too close to the reality of working-class fun to be drawn into the sanitised visions of old England that predominated in the early twentieth century.

Many societies restricted membership for women but they could not be excluded from *N&Q* and indeed the whole *N&Q* ethos seems to have been welcoming to all as long as the rules for correspondence were respected. It was a prolific contributor, Eliza Gutch, under the name of 'St. Swithin', who first suggested the idea of the Folklore Society in *N&Q*, February 1876. She became a founding

member of that society as she was of the English Dialect Society three years before. WEAA joined but like other northern folklorists was never prominent in this London based society.
WEAA's dialect and folklore contributions to *N&Q* began in 1868 with a focus on Lancashire. Throughout the following years, as his knowledge of other languages and literature expanded, he corresponded, often at length, on other dialects, philology, oriental tales, worldwide folklore, and particularly on Romani language and lore.

His talk on Lancashire Folk-Lore at the New Hall Islington (Manchester} in 1905, as reported in the *Guardian*, reflected much of his *N&Q* explorations.[315] As well as mentioning Thoms and the origin of the term folk-lore, WEAA linked manifestations in Lancashire with Arabian stories, Buddhist missionaries in India, European tales of brownies and the clergy of the middle-ages. He did not romanticise, denouncing the persecution of so-called witches and the dark superstitions that persisted.

Linguistics, Dialect and Lancashire Lore

For once, it is easy to trace WEAA's output as

he listed both his compositions in dialect, and his discourses on dialect in his 1869 bibliography, *The Literature of the Lancashire Dialect.*[316] He expanded this in the larger bibliography he contributed to in 1877, *A Bibliographical List of the Works..Illustrative of the Various Dialects of English.*[317]

WEAA worked closely with the early investigators of Lancashire folk lore, speech, and song. His expert knowledge was useful to scholars he met through *N&Q* such as Alexander Ellis and Walter Skeat, and they in turn assisted his writing. Ellis, for example, took interest in WEAA's *Cousin Liz*, using the verses for a pronunciation study. He consulted WEAA on 7 October 1867 on points of Lancashire dialect, 'You will think it strange after all the trouble you have taken, that when I endeavoured to write out the pronunciation of your Cousin Liz in Palaeotype, I scarcely felt certain of a single word.'[318] Palaeotype was a phonetic alphabet used by Ellis to describe the pronunciation of English sounds.

The distinguished Manchester journalist, John Howard Nodal, was another force in the study of the Lancashire dialect, and he may well

have recommended WEAA to these other scholars. Nodal's life intersected with WEAA's at many points. Born in Ardwick, he was a founder member and first President of MLC, a linguist, dialect scholar, promoter of the Manchester Arts Club, and secretary of the English Dialect Society. He was editor of the *Manchester City News* to which WEAA contributed.

As well as twenty-three AP letters, Nodal has his own archive at JRL. He and WEAA have several correspondents in common. A neat example of their networking is the list of Lancashire authors, started by Nodal as MLC President, expanded by WEAA as Hon. Sec, and then fully revised and completed for publication by Charles Sutton. Many members of MLC contributed and at James Crossley's urging, basic information for the authors was supplied. It is this list that identifies several dialect writers and their works, otherwise forgotten.[319]

WEAA also provided material from his own direct 'gleanings,' a favourite term of the time and one much used by WEAA. Academics in *N&Q* appreciated WEAA's local knowledge and

his willingness to record dialect words, songs, stories, and folklore for them, for instance, writing down the text of ballads he heard from street singers. This led to his inclusion in the company of distinguished linguists, and he was co-opted into prestigious publications. WEAA's name featured prominently in the seminal work *A Bibliographical List of the Works..Illustrative of the Various Dialects of English*.'[320] WEAA authored the Lancashire dialect section and additionally indexed the whole volume, compiling altogether around 3000 references. The indexing was a tricky business and WEAA's introductory explanation covers much of what he had learnt from Crestadoro.

WEAA's family background, his friendship with poets, both dialect and literary, and with local antiquarians like Richard Wright Procter, gave him access to valuable sources, oral as well as written. He was a reliable informant. In *N&Q* in 1868, for example, he replied to a query on Manchester poets, 'Mr. William Harper died Jan.25, 1857. A short notice of him is given in Literary Reminiscences, by R W Procter, Manch. 1860—a book containing much pleasant gossip concerning Lancashire

authors and actors. See also Evans's Lancashire Authors, 1850. The Brothers is sometimes attributed to Wm. Linelf, and sometimes to Thomas Smelt. I think the latter is the real Simon Pure.'[321]

It was through the *N&Q* network that WEAA interacted with both academic linguists and Lancashire historians. WEAA merged these interests, producing studies of Lancashire folk speech and song that appealed to both groups.

I was intrigued to find WEAA's name appearing in modern linguistic journals. Dr Javier Ruano García at the University of Salamanca, replied to my enquiry as follows, 'As far as I'm aware, William E A Axon continues to be a known figure in linguistic circles, especially in those of historical dialectology and among those scholars working on Late Modern English dialect variation more specifically.' [322]

Lancashire Historians

Simon Young, Brian Hollingworth, Alan J Kidd, and others regard 1850-1880 as the golden age of Lancashire dialect writing and folk related studies. WEAA was fortunate to find a thriving context for his antiquarian,

folk, and dialect interests as well as support for his explorations into print, very much sustained by *N&Q*. Everyone knew him. He produced small but vital works on Lancashire dialect, on vernacular stories and songs, and was always ready to help with information, loans of publications, favours, and friendship. WEAA counted both the prestigious and the homely amongst his friends. Even though association with men like John Harland would be valuable in terms of self-advancement, WEAA's motivation in developing his networks was the pure joy of the enthusiast in finding like minds. These were reciprocal relationships. John Harland, T T Wilkinson, John Higson, and James Bowker all illustrate this in different ways.

WEAA's friendships with the older generation were inevitably cut short, and Harland, Higson, Wilkinson, and finally Procter were all gone by the end of the 1881. They had formed his inner circle, and their correspondence represents a rich period of WEAA's life, a shared love of Lancashire, its language, literature, and history. WEAA's association with these scholars brought him credit.

Simon Young has richly captured the friendships of what he terms 'the Old Manchester gang', the Lancashire folklore writers predominant in c 1850-1880. He notes that WEAA alone lived on 'to write with the

same passion on the subject' and was the only member of this informal group to join the Folklore Society. The old gang come to vivid life in this appreciative and scholarly account. [323]

John Harland (1806-1868)

John Harland, one of the first collectors of Lancashire ballads; was the top reporter at the *Guardian*, a significant presence in literary and antiquarian circles. He died in 1868, only sixty-two years old. Gregory believes Harland and WEAA met each other at Campfield Reference Library and that WEAA assisted him there in the hunt for ballads.[324]

It was WEAA who compiled the invaluable list of Harland's works shortly after his death: this was published in *The Reliquary*. He knew exactly what Harland was working on. WEAA listed every title of Harland's separately published works, regretting that so much remained unidentified in periodicals and newspapers. WEAA cites Harland's authorship in other sources too such as *N&Q* and *Country Words*.

In 1875, as detailed later, WEAA edited and completed Harland's *Genealogy of the*

Pilkingtons of Lancashire, printed for private circulation.

Thomas Turner Wilkinson (1815-1875)

T T Wilkinson was an intimate member of WEAA's Lancashire circle. WEAA dedicated his *Folk Songs and Folk-Speech of Lancashire*, published in 1871, to him, 'in admiration of his talents, and of his acquirements in bibliography, science and archaeology.'[325] In a letter discussing the merits of 'skeletonised' ballads, Wilkinson thanked WEAA, being 'much honoured by your dedication'.[326]

There is a fair amount recorded for Wilkinson, a prominent Burnley figure. There are newspaper references, an entry in *DNB* as well as his own brief autobiography, included in a memorial to him.[327] Contributor to newspapers, journals, and learned societies, author of local histories, T T Wilkinson was renowned for his collaboration with John Harland in the collection of Lancashire folklore and ballads. Wilkinson wore his honours lightly and comes across both in his autobiography and in his correspondence with WEAA as a kind man, with a dry sense of humour.

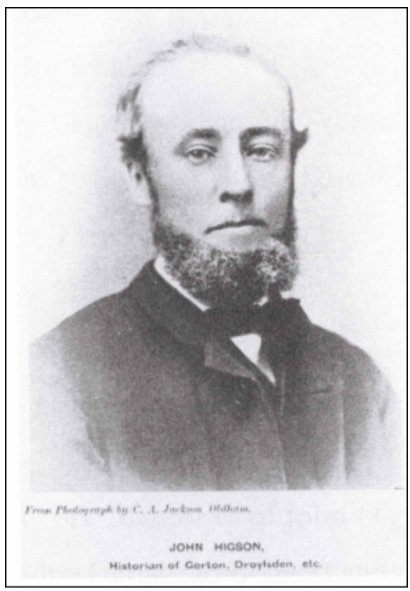
WEAA's entries in *N&Q* citing a Lancashire song prompted Wilkinson to make contact and a great deal of 'printing matter' business ensued with exchanges of books, pamphlets and articles, advice, reviews, and comments on each other's ideas for papers. They started corresponding in June 1869 and the letters continued regularly, totalling thirty in AP. Wilkinson's wish that they should meet up 'when we might have a good round of literary chat'[328] was soon fulfilled and there were frequent visits to each other's homes. Wilkinson certainly valued the younger man's expertise in the printing and publishing fields. He asked WEAA to consult Trübner on his behalf for the publication of *Lancashire Legends* or, failing that, Heywood or WEAA's own publisher in Manchester.

Wilkinson gently teased WEAA, suggesting how he should follow up his *Dublin University Magazine* anti-tobacco paper, reprinted as a pamphlet by Heywood, 'There are plenty of sinners in Burnley and a lecture might do them good.'[329]

Wilkinson was devastated by the sudden death of his second wife in 1874 and did not recover

from the grief. He wrapped up his commitments, writing in haste to WEAA in his final letters, commenting truly he was 'almost worked to death.'[330] In his last letter to WEAA, dated 16 January 1875, he asked WEAA for a copy of his index, discussed passing papers to Chetham's, and encouraged WEAA in his *Guardian* enterprise.[331] He died on 6 February 1875 and his papers went to Chetham's.

John Higson (1825-1871)



Although only brief, the friendship between WEAA and John Higson resulted in a marvellous crop of AP letters, a unique reflection of their respective private lives. More than any other letters in AP, Higson's chat, running from June 1870 to April 1871 illuminates WEAA, his family life and his pursuits, almost in a stream of consciousness fashion.

Born at Whitley Farm, Gorton, Lancashire, Higson was largely self-taught, worked as a cashier in spinning mills, and spent years collecting the material that informed his histories of Gorton and Droylsden. He was a regular contributor to the *Ashton Reporter* as 'H' as well as to the *Oldham Chronicle*.

Around 1868 they became aware of each other as writers in local newspapers and in *N&Q*. WEAA guessed that 'H' was John Higson and on several occasions quoted texts of ballads or local history that H had published in the *Ashton Reporter*. Higson bore no grudge for this, appreciating that WEAA meant well by quoting H's discoveries.

Higson knew of WEAA's reputation at the Campfield Library, but they were not acquainted until the summer of 1870. In his first letter of 14 June 1870, Higson referred to a mutual friend, the dialect poet James Dawson who suggested they should meet, 'A short time ago, friend Dawson, the Hartshead poet, said if ever you & I met we should be friends – for there would be so many things we should agree upon that to be otherwise would be impossible.'[332] Higson was

delighted to receive a swift reply from WEAA as well as his 'little brochure' that he sat up reading until 'the village clock chimming the midnight hour. It was a great treat. I feel sure you would succeed in delineating Lancashire Life etc etc'. [333]

Like WEAA, Higson was a doting family man and an active citizen. He was a zealous member of the Droylsden Mechanics Institute and a warden for the local church at Leesfield, teaching Sunday School, giving Penny Readings and talks. From his letters he sounds quite a strong-minded character, dismissive of Ben Brierley's vulgarity, of the scholar Furnivall's upsets but full of robust good humour, especially in his recollections of farming. He spoke his mind plainly, 'I never ask out of mere formality.' [334]

Higson lived out at Birch Cottage, Lees, and disliked coming into Manchester, "I hate large towns, Manchester especially, since Shudehill lost its book stalls. Your Free Library is out of the way.'[335] Instead, WEAA and Higson walked around Saddleworth Moor, Mow Cop, and the hills around Lees.

Higson loved nothing better than an

‘antiquarian spree,’[336] and his attempts to arrange them usually include John Owen, James Dawson, WEAA and a Samuel Andrews. Presumably, this was the same John Owen who helped Higson to rescue the first parochial register of 1666 from Newton Chapel, Manchester. Procter dedicated his *Memorials of Manchester Streets* to John Owen and his ‘mortuary treasures.’ WEAA had remarked to Higson, ‘writing is but a poor makeshift for social conversation.’[337] This reinforces the view of WEAA as a sociable soul, delighting in sympathetic company.

The friendship spilled over into the families. Higson sent messages to Mrs Axon, told WEAA how much his children had enjoyed WEAA’s story in *N&Q*, and thanked him for getting his son’s poem, written on shipboard, published. Higson relates that his family later heard someone reciting Daniel’s poem on the train. WEAA had published it in *The Band of Hope Treasury* and, unlike many poets, Daniel, at least according to his father, was grateful for WEAA’s improvement of transposing a line in the last stanza.[338]
Higson gave WEAA practical advice and help, especially with WEAA’s Lancashire dialect

studies, even lending him the precious scrapbook of his newspaper sketches for a month. Higson was apparently slightly in awe of WEAA. He was grateful but overwhelmed by WEAA's plan for Higson's glossary, 'You point out admirably what ought to be done with the Glossary – the prospect fears me. I have little time & I am afraid not much inclination to range through the books you name.'[339]

Robustly honest about his own pleasures and abilities, Higson was generous in his encouragement of WEAA, 'Biography is not my forte – you would do the thing well, & have sufficient energy, industry, patience & perseverance.'[340] Repeatedly he praised WEAA's writing, 'I see your contribution to my intellectual feast in N&Q.'[341]

As with other correspondents, the letters also shed some light on the bibliographic puzzles of WEAA's non-stop writing career. There are hints of works being contemplated, in progress, published or ready for review. Higson read one piece, WEAA's comic sketch of the Axon family outing to Southport, at the Tuesday evening Penny Reading at Queen Street Schoolroom, Springhead where it was very well received by the packed-out audience.

Higson discussed WEAA's idea for a book on folk songs, 'What sort of a work is it that you are contemplating on "folk songs"?',

[342]discussed Dr Whitaker whose *History of Manchester* WEAA was considering revising. Higson believed Whitaker to be wrong on the early history. He checked over the manuscript *Lancashire Glossary* and agreed to write reviews for WEAA's book in the *Ashton Reporter* and the *Oldham Chronicle* although this was not Higson's usual line.

Higson mentioned being unwell is in October 1870, first with a face-ache, headaches, and then a fever but these did not seem serious maladies. He was in understandable stress over restructuring at the Springhead Cotton-Spinning Company, and this may have contributed to his death in 1871. The last letter from Higson in AP is dated 21 April 1871 and he describes the firm's changes as 'utterly absurd,' not knowing whether he will come out of it better or worse off.[343] Apart from this, the tone is as cheerful and jovial as ever, ending 'I was in Manchester yesterday a long time but was kept busy at it so that I had to eat a piece of pork pie as I was flying through the streets towards the train between 3 and 4.'

The AP letters stop at this point, perhaps

Higson suffered a stroke or was otherwise incapacitated. Higson died on 13 December, leaving a wife and seven children. The obituary in the *Ashton Reporter* is the main source of information for his life.

Whenever an antiquarian died, grief was accompanied by a flurry of interest by his friends in the fate of the books and papers. T T Wilkinson wrote to WEAA of his sorrow at Higson's death, adding his concerns over the papers, 'I was much pleased with him when I met him at your house and little thought it would be my last interview with him. His MSS and Collections ought to be secured for the Chetham Library…Poor Higson!'[344] There was relief when Mr Higson's unfinished *Glossary of Lancashire Idioms* and other papers were placed at Chetham's.

It was a short but intense period of friendship, and it must have been a hard blow to WEAA to lose someone so compatible.

James Bowker

On 27 June 1870 Mr Higson wrote to WEAA of an old friend Jas. Bowker, now at the GPO in London but a 'true Lancashire man, born in Preston.' He thought WEAA would know the name through *N&Q*, and he was happy to put them in touch, 'use my name & all will be

right.'[345] According to Higson, Bowker's work on fairies and boggarts of Lancashire was just going through the press, and WEAA could never resist boggart tales. A correspondence between WEAA and Bowker ensued.

James Bowker is now only known for his *Goblin Tales of Lancashire*[346] which is still in print, an important collection of traditional tales though highly coloured in style. Ironically, Bowker's move to the GPO Dublin caused disruption in his correspondence with WEAA as letters were misdirected and lost for four years. Unfortunately, Bowker's handwriting is very hard to decipher and becomes progressively worse. Much of the content relates to WEAA's illnesses, as well as to their respective literary and antiquarian projects. The letters are always friendly and trusting. In the one dated 4 March 1879, Bowker addresses him as My Dear Axon, 'For I have dropped what poor Leigh Hunt used to call the "mistery" '.[347]
During 1879 WEAA acted as temporary editor of *Ben Brierley's Journal* and published several pieces from Bowker, including the serial *Phoebe Carew*. Bowker was a regular contributor to *Ben Brierley's Journal* both

before and after WEAA's stint as editor, with verses, stories, dialect sketches. WEAA's editorship of this popular Lancashire journal was an important phase in his career. Bowker produced at least one dialect poem as this was included in John Harland's prestigious *Lancashire Lyrics* published in 1866.[348] This poem *Hard Times* became well known. It is a powerful account of the impact of hunger. Bowker's poem was remembered years later by A G Gilchrist, in a letter to the *Guardian* in 1914, 'And here is another from James Bowker's song "Hard Times ; or, Th'Weyvur to his Wife":

> "Th'art gorrin' ter'ble pale, too, but fowk wi' nowt to heyt
> Con't luk as nice an' weel as them as plenty hes o'meyt"'[349]

It is through the AP correspondence that some at least of Bowker's life can be recaptured.

Lancashire Studies

WEAA's scholarly as well as creative interest in dialect should be seen in a wider context. Shorthand, rational spelling, philology, and phonetics were developing and converging in this period. WEAA was singularly positioned in being involved in all aspects. He was both collector and communicator. All these

advances, including systems for teaching ‘deaf mutes’ and universal languages were critical to WEAA as methods for recording knowledge and making it accessible to all. It was natural that librarians would be amongst the pioneers. The great American librarian, Melvil Dewey, was obsessed with phonetic spelling, convinced it would enable immigrants to learn English, and so be integrated into society. He wrote to WEAA triumphantly, ‘Cutter has now taken up bibliography, f, instead of ph.’[350] WEAA was drawn to the idea, though he never practised it or found many fellow enthusiasts in Manchester. Yet the idea must have been popular enough: I was surprised to discover the *Stockport Mercury* printing some of its columns in reformed spelling in the 1840s.

There were historical influences too. WEAA was drawn to the Neo-Platonists, to Utopian visions of a universal natural language as proposed by the seventeenth century Francis van Helmont, linked in turn with Swedenborg. In another convergence the same ideals led some towards vegetarianism. It is not surprising Isaac Pitman and WEAA were passionate promulgators of that movement too. Esperanto arrived in 1897 and WEAA may

well have learn it. He certainly knew practitioners of Esperanto, including Margaret L. Blaise, author of *The Esperanto Manual.*

The Literature of the Lancashire Dialect

WEAA's first bibliography of the Lancashire dialect was published in 1870, the same year as his *The Black Knight of Ashton,* but instead of being locally published it was produced by Trübner, a mark of WEAA's widening reputation. The book, *The Literature of the Lancashire Dialect*,[351] includes a short bibliographical essay by WEAA in which he rightly claims that this is the first attempt to register works in the Lancashire dialect. He points out modestly that it is imperfect and that he would welcome input.

The idea of the glossary had been much debated in the *N&Q* correspondence and in the letters from Ellis, Nodal, and Skeat to WEAA. Their recognition of WEAA's worth was realized with his bibliography in an expanded form, together with a large part of the essay, being included the *A Bibliographical List of the Works…*[352].

Folk Songs and Folk-Speech of Lancashire

WEAA's old mentor, Richard Wright Procter, wrote to him with sage advice on 20 July 1870. He also suggested Higson as a useful

contact, not knowing they were already in touch:

> ‘Your article on the Literature of the Lancashire Dialect is interesting and right so far as it goes. But before issuing in book form, had you better not complete the subject so far as may be? Otherwise you will leave it invitingly open for some one else to supersede you. There can be no worse policy literary or otherwise, than opening a mine and leaving it for others to gather the ore at their ease. I have experienced enough of this. I will be on the look-out for anything that may suit you : and Mr John Higson would be a willing aider if you send him a copy of your essay.’

Folk Songs and Folk-Speech of Lancashire: on the Ballads and Songs of the County Palatine was published in 1871 by Tubbs in Manchester and Trübner in London

The book runs to 96 pages and WEAA brilliantly realised his ‘attempt to give a bird’s eye view of the popular literature of the County Palatine.’ An editor might well have cut WEAA’s rhapsodies on the sacred role of the poet but there is little else that is not germane to the purpose. WEAA covered individual dialect writers, popular ballads, both vernacular and literary, included extensive quotations, dialect stories and anecdotes, and gave his own *Courting Time* both in Ellis’s glossic alphabet (KOARTI”N TOYM) and in non-dialect English. WEAA finished with a piece on Lancashire folklore.

He paid tribute to Harland and T T Wilkinson, to whom the book is dedicated, for their pioneering work in collection and study.

The reviewer in the *Dublin University Magazine*, probably Bowker with his Preston background, criticised WEAA's *Folk Speech and Folk Songs of Lancashire,* as being too short for the author to properly cover all that is promised by the title, 'Surely he cannot believe that the County Palatine is confined to South West Lancashire! What about the Fylde district, its literature, and literati?'

Another reviewer saw the merit of what WEAA had accomplished in such a short space, 'Under the above quaint title, and within the compass of a hundred pages, Mr. Axon has contrived to give much useful information on the subject of Lancashire songs and ballads as many less experienced writer would have done in five or six hundred.'[353]

There is no doubt that this is a book rich in knowledge, informed comment and prime examples of songs, stories, and superstitions. WEAA, characteristically avoids personal references but his own opinions are clear, in two instances especially. One is his already mentioned aversion to the harsh humour of John Collier, the first 'Tim Bobbin.' The other is his wish that the superstitions he is so keen to collect should disappear altogether, a mass of ignorance to be swept away by enlightenment. Much of what WEAA refers to are magical cures or omens of evil and it is certainly understandable

why he felt such festering corruption had no place in a modern society.

Songhunters

In the late 1860s WEAA produced his first article on Lancashire folk songs, published by a London journal, the *St. James's Magazine*. There is no clue in AP how this came about but possibly it was through his friend Bone. It is a passionate defence of the culture of Lancashire working people, flowery in style but informative.[354]

The most extensive modern survey of Victorian folk song is E David Gregory's *Victorian Songhunters.* In this book and in an earlier article, *The songs of the people for me*, Gregory argues for recognition of WEAA's significance, 'Axon is virtually unknown today, even among folk music enthusiasts and ethnomusicologists. But that is unfortunate, since he played an important role in publicizing Lancashire vernacular song to a middle- class audience in the 1870s and 1880s.'[355] Gregory and others have assumed WEAA was from a middle-class, educated background. To some, his role seems to be a 'mediator, expropriating and censoring workers' culture but Gregory argues that

WEAA genuinely valued and loved both the dialect and vernacular songs; the only failing being that, like others, he did not collect the melodies. In fact, WEAA did give the tune when known, for example citing the tune of *The Abbot of Canterbury* for *The Manchester Rebels*.[356]

Gregory regards 'John Harland, William Axon and T T Wilkinson' as the trio 'who would take up the Lancastrian cause' in collecting the regional ballads, including both printed and oral sources.[357] Gregory attributes the term 'folk song' to WEAA and views all three following the implicit principles of folk songs being the creation of urban or rural working people and that the tunes must be collected from the oral tradition whilst the text can be from either oral or print. All three men championed the songs of the people, including those that were political critiques of capitalism. Harland published his *Ballads and Songs of Lancashire* in 1865 and *Lancashire Folklore*, jointly written with T T Wilkinson, in 1867.

WEAA happily gleaned from both literary and vernacular sources but the first became less appropriate with the rigorous folklorist

approaches that evolved after the 1880s. WEAA would not have been greatly concerned. With his fascination with languages, customs, and legends, he always explored widely, from Lancashire dialect and vernacular through to oriental and Romany sources. Curiosity, pleasure, and scholarship kept him following new trails, ending up in different places. In 1904 an English teacher in Paris, Fred Rothwell, contacted him for advice on studying Lancashire folklore scientifically for an examination at the Sorbonne. Rothwell, a Lancashire man who came home to Wigan for his holidays, made interesting points, 'Harland's & Wilkinson's books are old & of practically no scientific use whatsoever. And the publications of the Folk Lore Society do not touch upon Lancashire specially.'[358] Fred Rothwell had read WEAA's papers on 'archaeological & kindred subjects', and thought he was exactly the right person to recommend 'profitable reading.' WEAA was perceived here as bridging the antiquarian and modern phases of folklore studies.

Ballad Collections

WEAA undoubtedly merits a place in the chronicles of folk song as the likely originator

of the Axon Collection at Chetham's Library. Along with other valuable ballad collections there, this forms a rich resource, treasured by musicians and historians. Most recently Eliza Carthy's use of the collections for her album *Big Machine* was recorded by the BBC.[359]

WEAA started collecting street ballads at an early age, and I believe his purchases form the basis of this collection. Although attributed to his grandson Geoffrey who originally gave the 280 ballads to the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, there 'remains a possibility that the broadside collection originally belonged to William and was passed down within the family.'[360] In 1900 Charles Sutton listed in WEAA's private collection, 'two collections of Irish street ballads, many hundreds of English street ballads, and a large series of the chapbooks, stories, song-books, recipe books, etc., sold by the pedlars in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.'[361]

There are several titles in the Chetham's collection that can be related to WEAA's purchases. WEAA wrote about some of his broadside ballad finds in *N&Q* and other

journals. Manchester newspapers sometimes repeated the information. For example, the *Manchester Weekly Times*, probably at WEAA's instigation, gave the full text of *Owd Ned's a Rare Strung Chap*, with the note, 'Mr. W. E. A. Axon communicates to Notes and Queries the following ballad, which was popular in Manchester at the commencement of the present century, and a curiously corrupted version of it may still be purchased from the vendors of street ballads. Swindells, the printer, was in trade about the commencement of the century, at No. 8, Hanging Ditch, whence he issued delectable broadsides and chapbooks concerning Mother Bunch, the Merry Piper, Tom Hickathrift, the Yorkshire Beauty, and other personages once famed as heroes and heroines.'[362]
Owd Ned's a Rare Strung Chap can now be viewed online in the digitised Axon Ballad Collection.[363]

WEAA established a reputation as a collector and friends knew his interests. In *N&Q* in 1868 WEAA wrote in response to T T Wilkinson's query about a particular Lancashire song, 'About two years ago I obtained from my friend Mr A H Mills, a copy of it, taken down

at the dictation of a gentleman then in his seventy-third year.' WEAA gives the text of *A Mon of Master Grundy's* with the comment it was not included in Harland's volumes.[364] In 1874 Alice Heywood sent him the rare copy of the *Preston Peace Egg,* 'the wonderful play of St. George' with the question, enough to make a folklorist's hair stand on end, whether WEAA might improve it.[365] She may have known of his enthusiasm for pace-egging plays through his account in *The Black Knight of Ashton*.[366] This treasure survives in AP.

Memorials of Dialect Poets

As the century progressed WEAA became a recognised authority on local dialect poets. He was the obvious choice, for example, to contribute sketches of Ben Brierley, Edwin Waugh, and Joseph Cooper to *North Country Poets,*[367] to chronicle their lives in Manchester newspapers, and to compose their obituaries. WEAA especially valued Edwin Waugh, Benjamin Brierley, Samuel Bamford, Margaret Rebecca Lahee, and Samuel Laycock. These dialect poets celebrated the rich humour and imaginative 'marlockin'[368] of Lancashire working people, chronicling both their enjoyments and sufferings. Entertaining

narratives, jokes and poignant poems were all in the mix. Like everyone else in the county, WEAA singled out Edwin Waugh as 'the laureate of Lancashire', supreme in portraying 'all its lights and shades.'[369] Like everyone else he responded to the poignancy of Edwin Waugh's famous poem, *Come Whoam to thi Childher an Me*.

WEAA was invited to the Edwin Waugh seventieth birthday celebration dinner on 29 January 1887 but did not attend as he was deeply upset by teetotallers having to pay the same high charge as those who would drink wine. (The same upset once occurred with WEAA and the MSS, causing him and others to threaten to resign.) WEAA seems to have ignored the whispers of Waugh's struggles with drink.

Samuel Laycock (1826-1893), the dialect poet, had retired to Blackpool and fallen into obscurity. WEAA launched a vigorous campaign to reverse the neglect. Perhaps saddened by writing so many obituaries of friends, WEAA unusually celebrated Laycock in 1891, two years before he died. In an address to the MLC, WEAA explained 'Let us honour him whilst he is living, and say of him now what we feel.'[370] WEAA gives an interesting perspective as he looked back at the peak of dialect writing, largely forgotten by the 1890s, and assesses its value. He admits

much was paltry, but contends that the dialect poems served their turn, especially during the Cotton Famine, of cheering and instructing their public. The dialect poets deserved to be remembered not just by language scholars but locally. WEAA singled out some of Laycock's poems as of literary worth, with one, *Ode to th' Sun*, impressing even James Crossley. WEAA draws a striking analogy of Laycock as a lay preacher, perhaps also suggesting the similar appeal of homely dialect verse, 'So whether basking in the sunshine, or watching the waves on Blackpool shore, or in the busy streets of Manchester or Ashton, he is a lay preacher, urging his fellows to endeavour and to endurance, insisting upon the duties of home, on the content and joy of domestic life, on the charms of friendship and the claims of human brotherhood.' This very much reflects WEAA's own values and surely reflects how he fulfilled his own preacher role. As well as being a prime source for Laycock's life, WEAA's article is an outstanding expression of the roots and emotional appeal of Lancashire dialect writing.

Margaret Rebecca Lahee

WEAA always supported women's rights and

there are three letters to him in the AP from the Rochdale Dame of Dialect, Margaret Rebecca Lahee, a rare woman in the male-dominated world of dialect writers. She needed such friends as WEAA. M R Lahee was Irish, only arriving in Lancashire as a young woman, but soon proficient in the dialect. She was not always appreciated as she should have been, perhaps because of her relationship with her partner, Susannah Wild. WEAA received a sharp rejection when he put forward Lahee's request to have her poem, *The Local Preacher's Prayer*, published in the MCL journal. George Milner, the President, made it clear this would not happen, 'I don't think anything can be said to Miss Lahee except that the Quarterly publishes only papers wh. Have been read before the Club & passed by the Council.'[371] A classic Catch 22 as women were debarred as members and therefore did not have this opportunity.

After M R Lahee died in 1895, Susannah Wild turned to WEAA to discuss an edition of her partner's poems, impressive evidence of his being a sympathetic and trustworthy friend. Shamefully, and unsuccessfully, Alderman Wilson tried to prevent M R Lahee's name appearing on the 1896 memorial to dialect writers in Rochdale's Broadfield Park.

PORTS MEMORIAL 0187

CHAPTER 10

BLACK KNIGHTS AND BOGGARTS

WEAA, Lancashire Dialect Writer

Inevitably WEAA not only studied Lancashire dialect but wrote in it: poems, sketches and stories. These, like most dialect works, are now rarely considered outside a few dedicated societies.

There is a good summary of dialect writing on the Chetham's Library blog,

> 'Modern readers can find Lancashire dialect very difficult to read, and looking at it through a contemporary lens can lead us to dismiss it as simplistic, whimsical, and patronising. However, it was extremely popular in its time, perhaps because it held a mirror to and affirmed the way of life, language, culture and humour that readers valued.'[372]

The Lancashire Dialect period

Lancashire dialect writers became immensely popular in the 1850s and 1860s as the flourishing tradition reached new readership through print. These writers shared and expressed the feelings of their audience, a close identification that became even more significant during the Cotton Famine years. There was a surge of aspirational dialect poets. This was the period when WEAA experimented with dialect writing but, like many others, he did not continue into later decades. The modern world at first stimulated dialect writing and then inevitably destroyed it.

Like many in the industrial regions, WEAA was drawn to explore

the countryside. By 1860, with over 10,000 miles of railway network complete and more on its way each year, many of the local districts became accessible. WEAA found entry into the community of dialect writers, whose circles often overlapped with local antiquarians, cottage historians and collectors of what became known as folklore. Soon, all this would vanish.

He gave an entertaining glimpse of the tribulations of train travel in his story, *The Mishaps of Robin o' Dingle; A Romance of Southport Sands*. '"Wig'n!" cried the porters hoarsely, and then came the confused struggle between those who were getting out and those who were getting in.'[373]

Following the advent of public education in 1870, dialect writing went into rapid decline. Brian Hollingworth commented on how brief the period was, adding, 'It is remarkable, for example, how quickly the three outstanding dialect poets burnt themselves out. Edwin Waugh lived until 1890, Samuel Laycock till 1893, Joseph Ramsbottom till 1901, but almost all their effective poetry was written before 1870.'[374]

Ben Brierley, a hand-loom weaver who became a popular local writer and dialect poet, moved astutely into elite intellectual circles and was a founder member of the MLC.

His much-loved journal, *Ben Brierley's Journal of Literature, Science and Art*, launched in 1869, was a clever mixture of dialect and standard English, his own dialect writing being under the persona of Ab-o'-th'-Yate. Brierley and his journal formed its own community of print. WEAA was involved as both a temporary editor and contributor in standard English and dialect. The journal was another virtual club with readers helping to form both the content and the format. Early on Brierley apologised for his mistaken entanglement with the London publishers when he had believed wrongly that there would be insufficient northern input. It was soon back on track, free of 'foreign accessories' and 'a credit to the Northern Counties of England.'[375] The journal had an unusually long run as a local periodical, ending in 1891 when Brierley was too ill to continue. No one could replace him.

The importance of what Brierley created in terms of Lancashire identity, the shifting values of dialect, has been brilliantly explored by Margaret Beetham:

> 'The meaning of dialect in the Journal is not at all straightforward and Brierley produced some quite contradictory defences, sometimes defining dialect as the true voice of the people, sometimes explaining that it is a device to lift his hearers out of their barbarism by starting where they

are and gradually elevating them into an appreciation of literature.'

WEAA with his love of the past but with positive views of the present and future was the perfect inhabitant of the world Brierley captured, as Margaret Beetham defined, 'In Ben Brierley's Journal, metropolitan and local, Standard English and dialect, nostalgia for the past and a commitment to progress, all circulated together to create a local culture and a set of local identities for the late Victorian period.'[376]

Lancashire Lad

WEAA was unusual in being both a creative dialect writer and a recognised authority on Lancashire folk speech and song. He grew up amongst Lancashire working people, experiencing manual labour as a child but within the family business and on the fringes of lower middle class. Familiarity with different social contexts was a rare gift for an aspiring writer and WEAA fully exploited this, particularly regarding 'folk-speech of Lancashire.'[377]

He had great admiration for what he termed The Lancashire Lad, 'your real Lancashire lad is one of nature's gentlemen at heart.'[378] To

WEAA these working people were characterised by a deep sense of humour, endurance of adversity, and by their love of home, their virtues often hidden under a brusque manner. As WEAA commented, the dialect poets and story tellers mostly belonged to this class, self-educated Lancashire men and women, who achieved popular fame.

Dialect Pieces

As a young man WEAA experimented with the popular forms of dialect writing. His light humour and ability to switch to poignancy made him a natural. He had great relish for boggarts, narrative twists, and imaginative dialogue. Boggarts were apparitions of the dark, terrifying demons or ghosts, once greatly feared in northern England, especially Lancashire. They bear no relationship to the boggarts of *Harry Potter* and the *Spiderwick Chronicles*, the inventions of 'fantasy carpet-baggers' as Simon Young wonderfully termed them.[379]

WEAA produced both poems and stories, very much in the Edwin Waugh mode. One of his poems, *Courtin' Toime*, which came out of his romance with Jane, has echoes of Waugh's *Sweetheart Gate*.

WEAA's period as a creative dialect writer lasted for about five years. The earliest piece was probably *The Gallowsfield Ghost*, published in *The Ashton Weekly Reporter* of 27 May 1865. *Dingle Cot* followed on 31 March 1866. Both were under his name 'Wm. E A Axon'. Other pieces were anonymous, identified later when they appeared in compilations. They were produced as pamphlets and at least one broadside. Most were published or printed by Abel Heywood.

Dr. Rondeau's Revenge, and other Lancashire Sketches, published in 1867, is the best known. *The Ashton Weekly Reporter* for 17 August announced the publication by Abel Heywood as a 'little volume consisting of tales illustrative of Lancashire life and character, originally contributed to our columns by Mr. Axon, and which it has been thought desirable to reproduce with some additions in a permanent form.'

This collection gives a full flavour of WEAA's range. There are tall stories told in good company and convivial settings. Pranks, ghosts, boggarts, nicknames, and robust humour prevail. The poems have standard

themes, sweetly told, of young lovers, the old mother left at home with only one child, and the hardship of the weaver's life. The prose pieces are *Dr. Rondeau's Revenge*, *Gallowsfield Ghost*, *Abner Clarke's Convert* and the poems are *Dingle Cot*, *Courtin' Toime*, *Dukinfield Belles* and *The Weaver's Song*.

Courtin' Toime has a real depth of feeling for the evenings walking with Jane in the flowery fields:

'Uv o' the toimes o'th' day an' neet,
Thev's one at aw loike th' best,
It comes wi" the deein' o' the leet,
When th' sun has gone to rest.

An' when th' pwd clock is up o'th stroke,
My heart is reer an' fain ;
Aw' dons mi swinger on, an' goes
To meet my sweetheart Jane.'[380]

Dr. Rondeau's Revenge itself must have been a popular piece as it was included in slightly abridged form in *A Case of Samples*, a collection of pieces adapted for 'Readings and Recitations'.[381]

The Haunted Bridge or the Man who Married a Ghost is an intriguing piece, not just for the tale itself but for what it reveals of WEAA. Both the sophisticated narrator, presumably WEAA, and the old man in the 'out-of-the way

clough' who tells the tale, can look objectively at superstitions, knowing they are not real but still enjoying what might be there after all.[382] Their discussions of how old superstitions can linger on whilst not being altogether believed, are relevant to WEAA's studies of folklore.

Simon Young, the expert of boggarts and boggart literature, has examined the survival of boggart belief in Lancashire, the handful of boggart works from dialect literature, mostly written from the 1850s onwards. He notes the tendency of these works to debunk the supernatural with humorous explanations. WEAA was exactly echoing his contemporaries in making his tale one of these 'boggart works without boggarts':[383]

> 'Terrified the lad watched in terror as the boggart appeared and in desperate fright grappled with it: 'Under the white lady's huge sheet he found 'th' buxom form an' pratty face uv Mary Siddall! Aw dunno think a boggart ivir got such a kissin' afore, an' aw dunnot think ut one ivir loiked bein' kissed as weel as moine did. Does'nt theaw think so, Mally? 'I think thou wert an impudent lad, an' I think I boxed thy ears well for thee.'

Of course, Mary Syddall is 'his now anything but ghostly wife', his true and loving mate. The bantering affection of the old couple lifts the tale above the usual fare. Other authors would have concentrated on the joke rather than on the gentle portrait of the man and wife.

The *Manchester Times*[384] has an advertisement for *Abel Heywood's 1870 Christmas Budget*, edited by WEAA.[385] Abel Heywood, Chartist, newspaper wholesaler, printer, publisher, wallpaper manufacturer, 'Radical Mayor,'[386] was an immensely important civic leader. Nothing could have been more valuable than this early endorsement of WEAA through entrusting him with the *Christmas Budget*. The texts are mostly standard English but with some dialect.

Most editors ended up writing content and it is frustrating because the pieces are unnamed not to be certain which WEAA wrote in the *Christmas Budget*. With his versatility, I suspect he produced the Dickensian style *Mr. Pimpchook's Party* and voiced the Professor who draws on Hindu legends when the company will not excuse him from taking part in the entertainment. As well as stylistic clues there are happy and humorous notes that echo what was going on in his life. There is the local antiquary, the Long Man, surely a composite of WEAA's older friends:

> 'He was greatly beloved by the people, and his white hairs were no unfrequent visitors at many of the country hamlets, for a great deal of his time was spend [sic] in rambling

> excursions in investigation of archaeology and folk-lore, and his familiarity with the people had put him in possession of many quaint stories of the country side.'

WEAA revealed that his Manchester Crichton Club friend, Joseph Mowbray Hawcroft, helped with the introduction and wrote three of the pieces, *King Christmas*, *The Ghost of Fern Hollow*, and *Eawr Kesmus Spree*.[387]

WEAA stated in *A Bibliographical List of the Works That Have Been Published* that he was the author of an anonymous dialect piece, *The Mishaps of Robin o' Dingle; A Romance of Southport Sands,* published in *Abel Heywood's Christmas Budget* for 1870. The statement is given under the entry for Abel Heywood. *The Mishaps of Robin o' Dingle; a Romance of Southport Sands* must have made Jane Axon laugh with its sly references to her own marriage. Dingles, robins, and trips to Southport were all good associations for WEAA. WEAA recycled variations of his *Romance of Southport Sands* in the *Co-operative News*, *Ben Brierley's Journal* and probably in *Churchmans's Family Magazine*. *Mr Pimpchook's Party* was also included in this *Case of Samples*[388], a collection with other WEAA pieces. *Mr. Pimpchook* made the publishing

rounds, ending up as *Pimpchook's Party and Other Tales*, edited by WEAA and published by Heywood. Good value for sixpence.[389]

I found WEAA's *The Buried Treasure* in *Ben Brierley's Journal* of 13 July 1878. Late as it is, this piece contains all the elements that drew WEAA into dialect and into the fellowship of those who spoke it. The opening especially conveys his delight, 'It was not the first time I had lifted the clinking latch of old Jaddie's cottage.' WEAA then combined an affectionate portrait of an elderly married couple, the 'fine old fellow' being full of fun and WEAA's favourite 'prime marlocks', with a dialect conversation and a humorous poem, *The Tenth Baby* that happens to drop from WEAA's pocket, something that he had 'versified for a local periodical.'[390]

WEAA excluded *Dr. Rondeau's Revenge, and other Lancashire Sketches* from the list of his books and pamphlets in the *Annals of Manchester*, published in 1886. The earliest publication he cites is *Co-operation and Partnerships of Industry,* published 1867. Perhaps WEAA felt his early ventures into dialect would not be understood or

appreciated at this late date. As the century progressed dialect became more of an oddity, fine for humour and music hall but not for serious consideration. By 1908 the *Yorkshire Post* reviewer, welcoming the poet T.E. Brown back to the mainstream, commented, 'Possibly his dialect poetry has told against him. It is always a dangerous popularity, because short-lived, and because further, it is not the vehicle for poetry of the deepest and wildest range.'[391]

The Black Knight of Ashton

By the end of the 1870s WEAA had largely moved away from writing in dialect. But before he did so, he produced an astonishing book, a fusion between creative writing, dialect, and record of a folklore event. This book is longer at sixty-two pages than his purely dialect compositions or anything else he had yet produced and it is entitled *The Black Knight of Ashton, Being an Account of a Visit to Ashton-under-Lyne to Witness the Annual*

Riding of the Black Lad, with some Tales and Songs by the Way.[392] The full title is important to distinguish it from WEAA's much staider, academic essay entitled *The Black Knight of Ashton* in his collection *Lancashire Gleanings*, published thirteen years later.[393]

Original copies of *The Black Knight of Ashton* are rare. The cover alone plunges the reader into a riotous folk world, far more violent and chaotic than that represented by proponents of the Merry England myths. WEAA's account, written with such relish, is incredibly valuable. He brings rare insight into the complexities of past and present. He knows the tide is turning and all this will soon be gone, observing not just the ceremony itself but the additions such as the cart of children, 'precocious school politicians' who bellowed out their hymn of:

'Aw am a little Tory
An' that aw wont deny;
An' before aw'd be a Liberal,
Aw'd lay me dean and dee'

A succinct comment on the complex political scene in Manchester where many working-class radicals detested the Whigs or Liberals, proclaiming themselves radical Tories.

WEAA's account is fired with a distinct sense of times passing, of rapid change where the survival of the Black Knight custom is a miracle in this 'most modern-looking of our towns.' However, he is

not sentimental and cheerfully sees a challenge for antiquarians in hunting down relics like the Black Knight. He no more laments the passing of 'feudal grandeur and misery' than he does the new streets and houses of Ashton that have replaced the close and crooked habitations that were 'often more stable and picturesque than comfortable or healthy.'

The Black Knight is the narrative of WEAA's trip to the Easter Monday Fair in the company of his friend Mr Digson, a proud Lancashire man and collector of its traditions. They deviate to visit an old Chartist and amateur botanist, Long Ned o'Bills, who regales them with stories. After the ceremony more characters are encountered: the herbalist referred to as Th'Docthur, his wife, and Jimmy the Tailor. The Doctor's rattling tale, *Race with the Devil*, is a unique account of a Pace-Egging Mummers play, 'Thirty years sin' pace-eggin' wur mich moar practised nor is it is neaw.' Like the debunking boggart tales, the fright at the end turns into a comical twist. Other stories and songs follow familiar folklore grounds of the Devil and the Tailor, the legend of Merton Sands, suicides, and of course more boggarts. Both Mr Digson and WEAA contribute. Mr Digson 'rattled through' a ballad he once heard a sailor sing 'at a merry party in Manchester,' Old Nick and the Skipper; the ballad has lines reminiscent of Sir

Patrick Spens, is not in dialect and is very well received, 'goo it, eawd lad.' WEAA relates a Hindu legend, explaining its Sanskrit origins, the translation into Chinese around the year 800, and how similar tales are found across time and place. The Hindu legend prompts a tale from Jimmy the Tailor on the Hartshead Boggart.

The whole adventure ends with a recitation of a long, non-dialect poem *A Peep at the World through Thackeray's Spectacles*, the verses being read by a nameless one of the company. I cannot trace any authorship for this piece or the link to Thackeray, but I suppose this is one of WEAA's compositions, slyly given as anon.

There is a curious mix in these entertainments. As with the *Christmas Budget*, all the characters in *The Black Knight of Ashton* seem ready to accept literary tales and verses as much as the dialect yarns and poems. Even WEAA's little lecture on folklore and his Hindu legend are listened to politely. The science of folklore as it became in the late nineteenth century imposed strict definitions on what might constitute pure folk culture, dismissing the heady variety that most people enjoyed and

that is gloriously present in WEAA's fascinating account. Soon people would find their 'Varieties' happily migrated to the music halls.

WEAA's *The Black Knight of Ashton* is a romping narrative of a rough world, of colourful but believable characters with their turbulent histories, cunning knowledge, precious collections of books, including botany, Cobbett's *Register* and Ernest Jones's *People's Paper*. Long Ned has pictures of Feargus O'Connor and the Rev. J.R. Stephens on the wall, names that had very definite echoes of extreme radicalism. Long Ned was rumoured to have had 'more than one Chartist pike in his roof in 1839.'

WEAA robustly described the wild ceremony itself; the motley band, one 'black-lad-ship' with his cuirass stuffed with heather and wobbling on his horse, another in sumptuous velvet and plumed helmet with a naked sword in one hand and a bunch of corn-marigold in the other. Tin cans rattle, every public-house pays a tax, ale foams and the knights, at least three in number, stayed guild-riding from two o'clock until dark. WEAA and Mr Digson only just make the last train back to Manchester.

Digson/Higson

The logical assumption would be that Mr Digson is John Higson. But Abel Heywood had announced the publication of *The Black Knight of Ashton* on 16 April 1870 in the *Ashton*

Weekly Reporter, predating WEAA and Higson's first meeting in person in the summer of 1870. They could not have been at the Black Knight together in reality whatever WEAA's fictional invention. I suspect the name is WEAA's playful amalgamation of those two well-known local figures, the dialect poet James Dawson and the antiquarian Higson.

WEAA refers to Higson in *The Black Knight*, referencing Higson's account of rough horseplay at Crickets Lane, published in the *Ashton Reporter*, Easter 1866. [394] Simon Young pointed out that WEAA's tale of the Hartshead Boggart in *The Black Knight* 'is based on Higson's writing on Lees from the year before and the tale of the boggart funeral train there.'[395]

In his third letter to WEAA, dated 27 June 1870, Higson made a light reference to the connection, 'By the bye, Mr Bowker in hastily passing through Manchester a few days ago picked up a copy of your Black Knight etc & is very much pleased with it. Yesterday I got a letter from him & amongst other matters he asks, "Who is Digson?"'[396] Higson was in on the joke.

Joe o'Dicks Corner

Naturally the curious festival of the Black Knight or Riding the Black Lad attracted the attention of local antiquarians, with many debates over interpretation and possible origins in the time of Edward IV and Richard 111. Samuel Bamford's poem *A Wild Rider* was inspired by the Balck Knight, John Roby covered it in *Traditions of Lancashire*, and several in WEAA's antiquarian circle wrote about the ceremony, including John Higson, T T Wilkinson, Colonel Henry Fishwick, J Harland, and Charles Hardwick. The legend and ceremony continued to fascinate. William Carew Hazlitt cited WEAA's pamphlet as an authoritative source for the Black Knight in *English Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases*.[397]

Given the fame of the Black Knight, there may well be several likely contenders for the two-part story *The Black Knight of Ashton* that featured in *Joe o'Dick's Corner* in *Ben Brierley's Journal* in 1879/1880. But the mix of 'Boy's Own' style narrative with antiquarian analysis, the dialect conversations of the gang at Joe o'Dicks and characters in the story are all hallmarks of WEAA. The author's expertise in the legend of the tyrannical Sir Ralph Ashton

as well as references to ballads suggest again WEAA's hand.

This was the period when WEAA was the temporary editor of *Ben Brierley's Journal* and the issues are full of his pieces, both under his own name and as The Manchester Pythagorean. His friends W R Credland and James Bowker also provided much copy. The other features entertaining the Joe o'Dick's Corner gang are *The Goblin Builders* and *The Goblin Woodman*, and both again could well be by WEAA. There is a neat reference to Ben Brierley in the first Joe o'Dick's Corner piece, 'The company at the "Old Bell" had looked very glum since "Owd Ab" had gone to America, so Joe o'Dick's said he would tell them a tale about a rueful company and what became of their solemnity.' Owd Ab was Ben Brierley in his dialect persona of Ab-o'-th'-Yate, and the tale was *The Black Knight of Ashton*.

Whether WEAA was the author or not, the gang at Joe o'Dick's Corner very much reflect the good fellowship that WEAA enjoyed in this rich period of his life. Dialect and local traditions placed him in a true community of companionship and print.

CHAPTER 11

ALLIGATORS AND ALUM

Two Strings to His Bow

Early in 1874 the startling news spread that WEAA had left Campfield Library to become commercial secretary with the Antilles Phosphate and Chemical Company. There is an AFB note that he additionally became secretary for the West Indian Phosphate Company Ltd. WEAA had little or no commercial experience as several friends commented, and he was entering a risky field. The mystery of WEAA's sudden career change may be explained by another opportunity that occurred in the same period.

The AP letters reveal that in December 1873, C P Scott, editor of the *Guardian*, invited WEAA to start a *Local Notes and Queries* (*LNQ*) column. It was a *New Grub Street* dream come true. WEAA accepted the offer. It was probably this, rather than the post of commercial secretary, that motivated him to resign his post as Sub Librarian.

The move launched him as a journalist. WEAA produced the weekly *LNQ* feature from 5 January 1874 through to 1 October 1877. Even when the feature ended, WEAA continued to work for the *Guardian*. At some stage he was appointed to a permanent post on the staff, remaining there until 1905.

Running a weekly feature was a gamble in comparison to the security of the Sub Librarian post at Campfield. WEAA, needing some form of supplementary income, fortunately had contacts in the chemical trade and industry. His friends the Spences owned the two companies where he became secretary. He may have called on them for help or was taking up offers they had already made. There is some evidence that he had previously undertaken various paid commissions for the Spences. Being a commercial secretary was likely to be far less onerous than being a Sub Librarian of an expanding library network.

Unusually for an antiquarian, WEAA's curiosity extended to commerce, and moreover he was concerned not just with the past but with how the past and the present were shaping the future. He knew how critical it was to capture recent history, particularly in Manchester, the centre of manufacture, new machinery, trade, and commerce. WEAA argued that these neglected branches of history should be investigated. The best expression of his foresight is found in his address to LCAS in 1889, 'Then we are in the midst of a busy commercial centre; and I do not know of any branch of archaeology in which there is more to be done than with reference to the history of commerce.'[398] He put forward the same case for manufacture and machinery. WEAA perhaps welcomed the opportunity to participate in the city's great commercial sector.

The Antilles Phosphate and Chemical Company, January 1874 to June 1874

WEAA was employed by the Antilles Phosphate and Chemical Company for the whole of its very short life. The company was registered in January 1874 and
from 31 January 1874 was based at 3 Bond Street near Ardwick, taking over the premises vacated on the same date by the West Indies Phosphate and Chemical Company.

The Antilles papers in the National Archives record leasing the Low Lands Estate in the French territory of St. Martin's in the West Indies. Eleven shareholders were listed, and their occupations have an adventurous flavour with a retired colonel, a sea captain, a master mariner, and a farmer as well as chemical agents, merchants, and manufacturers.

Phosphate mining, like the gold rush, produced a fever of expectation in the mid-nineteenth century and many disappointments. The quality and quantity of viable resources varied enormously, and the Low Lands Estate speedily proved valueless. A resolution to voluntarily wind up the company was taken on 19 May 1874 and confirmed on 4 June 1874. This was announced in *The London Gazette* of 16 June 1874.

Evil Days

Thomas Baker, Chair of the Library Committee, caught up with the news in August 1874, writing worriedly to WEAA, 'I did not know that the Antilles Company had fallen on evil days. How will you be affected by it?'

Baker's concern was understandable. Perhaps as well as the consequences of the collapse, he was worried that if there were anything dubious in this company WEAA might be caught up in legal proceedings.

Certainly, the main person involved with the Antilles, David Vincent Steuart, did cause disaster in this and other enterprises but there is no suggestion of fraudulent speculation. Bad judgement seems to be the root cause with too much reliance placed on the proprietors far away on St Martin. Another director, James Mudie Spence, was prevented by ill health from properly exploring the West Indies which might have avoided the poor investment. The shareholders' money had floated purchase of the Low Lands estate, so presumably all that was lost. WEAA did not have shares.

The West Indian Phosphate and Chemical Company Ltd
WEAA is listed as secretary in The West Indian Phosphate and Chemical Company both in AFB note and in the papers at the National Archives. The dates given are for 1876 and 1877. Company records show the enterprise was arranged with the Venezuelan Government together with the territories of the intriguingly named Rogues Islands, and Orchid Island.

When this company vacated 3 Bond Street, it moved to the prime central location of 108 King Street. This was a prosperous district of banks, finance, and business offices. Manchester Town Hall was then on the corner of King Street and Cross Street. From early 1877 to 1910, following the abandonment of the Campfield building, the Reference Library was housed there. The *Guardian* offices were nearby on Cross Street, although between 1879 and 1886 the editorial and printing offices moved temporarily to a Salford Mill. It was a handy area for WEAA.

The West Indian was voluntarily wound up on 15 August 1877.

It looks as if Peter Spence's involvement in

phosphate mining through the West Indian company cost him his alum factory at Goole, wrongly named Gode in *DNB*. The *DNB* entry is as follows, 'He was forced to sell this in the 1870s, after the failure in Redonda, in the West Indies, of his company formed to mine phosphate deposits and convert them to fertilizers.'

The Spence Family
Like exotic labels on cotton bales, the Spences brought a touch of colourful adventure into WEAA's life.

Peter Spence, his sons Frank Spence, James Mudie Spence, and his daughter Mary, married to a Tom Kelly, are familiar names in the AP. Many of the letters predate WEAA's company appointments. Frank Spence was a regular reader at Campfield and a loyal supporter of free libraries. MCLA has several letters sent by Frank to Crestadoro and to WEAA.

The Spences were a powerful force in alum manufacturing and a prominent presence in Manchester. At one stage they were regarded as the largest alum producers in the world. Their affection for WEAA was transparent and largely explains his appointment as their commercial secretary. Their intention was probably to give him more time to devote to temperance and literary activities.

Peter Spence and Frank Spence were temperance men, joint campaigners with WEAA. Like WEAA, they were also fervently anti-tobacco. James Mudie and Mary Spence were writers, both involving WEAA in their projects.
Sentiment alone would not have won him the appointments. As the Spences knew, WEAA had a good reputation as secretary for various local societies. There are many instances of men of letters taking such roles, for example, Samuel Smiles at the Leeds and Thirsk Northern Railway and then at the South Eastern Railway.

Paper, Waste, and Statistics

WEAA may not have known about phosphates, but he could offer some acquaintance with alum as a prime ingredient in the paper and textile industries, and in the treatment of sewage. WEAA's experience of paper technology, was not just from his childhood labour on lapboards. In 1871 he had gained theoretical expertise from his commission with Trübner, editing and expanding a work on the history of paper. Frank Spence advised him on some technicalities. The author, Samuel Spalding, sent his appreciation to WEAA from the Garrick Club, approving of the 'additional curious matter you have collected.'[399] When WEAA wrote of alum as an agent in waste disposal he diplomatically gave Peter Spence a mention. This article, *Utilization of Waste*, was published in 1874.*[400]* WEAA had a journalistic talent for grasping any subject, however technical, clarifying the key issues in a fashion that instantly engages the reader.

The Spences would have been impressed by WEAA's grasp of both technology and statistics, his meticulous analysis of data to publicise causes. Frank Spence, for example, consulted WEAA over figures for the anti-smoking campaign. WEAA was active in MSS from around 1870 although the exact year he joined is not known. His major MSS papers date from 1874 onwards. He had already made a name for himself as a statistician outside Manchester; two of his papers generated much discussion.

Always interested in the Free Libraries, the Spences would be aware of the paper WEAA had read to the London Statistical Society in June 1870, *Statistical Notes on the Free Town-Libraries of Great Britain and the Continent.*[401] His references to teetotal libraries would have pleased the Spences. WEAA became a Fellow of the London Statistical Society in 1871, remaining one until 1880. He added FSS to his name on appropriate publications. His next paper was on tobacco consumption, and the shocking cost to the nation of this indulgence in a narcotic.[402] Again this would have been of key interest to the Spences.

The editor of the *Food Journal* congratulated WEAA on 'the sensation excited by your article in the November number [1873] and paid the good sum of £1.17.6 for it.[403] This was the well-researched survey of *Trades and Longevity*[404] that WEAA read before the Royal Medical and Chirugical Society on 22 October 1872. The talk, linking high mortality to the drink trades, was even reported in the *Lancet*.

Another asset would have been WEAA's knowledge of patent law and reform, gained through working with Crestadoro. The Spences

would be aware of WEAA's stirring article in the *Co-operative News*. The Spences took out various patents, including the key one in 1845 for the new alum process. They were used to court battles, for example, in 1887 when Kurtz and Co won an action against them, both claiming to have originated a patent for fixing dyes.

Peter Spence (1806-1883): the Patriarch

It is rare for an industrialist to feature in *DNB*, but Peter Spence (1806-1883) merited an entry. He was Scottish, the son of a hand-loom weaver and a self-taught experimental chemist. In 1845 he changed the whole alum industry by inventing manufacture from coal shale and the by-produce liquor of gasworks. It is said that he wiped out the centuries old Yorkshire alum industry in the space of six months.

In 1846 Peter Spence set up his main factory at Pendleton and spent the rest of his life in Manchester. He was a fervent promotor of temperance and an active member of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. DNB cite him as a 'public man and a staunch Congregationalist.' WEAA, Peter Spence and Frank Spence all became members of the Manchester Scientific and Mechanical Society at the fifth meeting in October 1872.

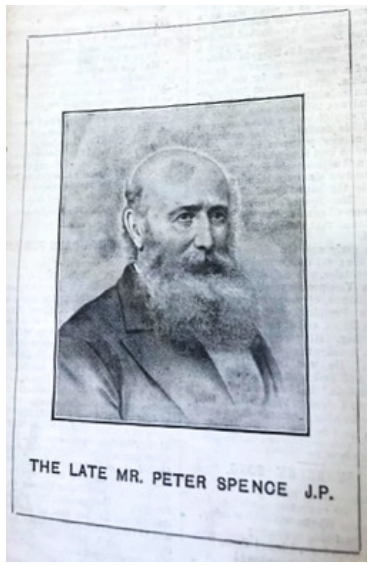
Peter Spence was evidently a formidable adversary, and his son-in-law, David Vincent

Steuart (Vin), must have dreaded the frequent feuding over partnerships, companies, and finances. The Spence archives in the Catalyst Science and Discovery Centre and Museum at Widnes tell the story of the disastrous muddles of companies set up by David Vincent Steuart, the Dunns, James Mudie Spence, and David Spence.[405]

It is to WEAA's credit as a peaceable man that he managed to stay friends with the different members of the Spence family, despite the squabbles between them. Like WEAA, Peter Spence was active in the Independent Order of Golden Templars (IOGT) but was forced through pressure of work to pay someone else to carry out his function as treasurer. He never begrudged helping good causes. The Catalyst Spence archives show he gave 10% of profit to charity and regularly supported ragged schools in Manchester. His only indulgence was cultivating plants, especially orchids, exotic ferns and chrysanthemums. Botany was another passion he shared with WEAA who was surely invited to the marvellous glasshouses at his palatial residence in Old Trafford, Erlington House.

WEAA almost certainly wrote the *Guardian* obituary for Peter Spence.[406] It bears all his hallmarks. Most obituaries are simple, chronological descriptions but WEAA drove straight into the fundamentals of a person's life and passions. He could tell a gripping story, packed with details but concise, and lightened with touches of humour. WEAA would have known better than anyone the roles Peter Spence played in their mutual

interests of the Mechanics Institutes, the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, the Band of Hope, the IOGT, and the United Kingdom Alliance. Peter Spence and Frank Spence jointly founded the English Anti-Tobacco Society.



James Mudie Spence (1835-1878): WEAA's Adventurous Friend

WEAA enjoyed correspondence from friends leading exciting lives in distant regions. There are lengthy letters in AP with various tales of engineering in India, farming in Australia and explorations in Canada. The vicarious pleasure of sharing such adventures must have been at its most intense with James Spence, an extremely colourful character. Old Peter Spence did not admire his eldest son's reckless

courage and avoided business entanglements with him, warning Vin, 'I hope you see your way out of it but in James hands you place yourself under a pilot who will send your vessel right over the centre of a coral reef without the slightest regard for wasting money. I shall at any rate resist all attempts to make me a party to the affair in any shape whatever.'[407]

James was an explorer, a mountaineer, a member of the Alpine Club and a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. He lived for a time in Carácas, the capital of Venezuela, enjoying great attention from politicians, merchants, and members of the society La Socieded de Ciencias fisicas y naturales de Carácas (Society of Physical Sciences of Carácas). This was started by Dr A Ernst, a German scientist resident in Venezuela, who accompanied James on several expeditions. James was the first to climb the highest mountain of the coastal chain, the Peak of Naigutá, and a plant found on the summit was named after him. He met with great kindness and enthusiastically explored the country's mountains, rocky islands, jungles, tracking down animals and plants, especially orchids. Peter Spence had an unrivalled collection of Carácas orchids: presumably these and the other rare orchids, ferns and exotica in his glasshouses were gifts from the son he disparaged.

WEAA's involvement with James explains another mystery, the oddity of his being a corresponding member of this society. His membership card, dated 4 August 1875, has been proudly preserved in AFB. WEAA added the resounding title to his name on several of his publications. Another Manchester friend, the geologist, botanist and Salford librarian, John Plant, also became a corresponding member.

Following his return to Manchester in 1872, James excited much notice with his talk on

the people and products of Venezuela. The natural history objects and artefacts he had collected were exhibited at the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, again arousing great interest. It is likely that WEAA wrote the vivid report for the *Guardian*.[408] Even as late as 1959 a reader of *Country Life* was wondering what had happened to this rare collection.[409]

James' next venture was to visit the West Indian islands on behalf of The West Indies and The Antilles companies, but he was hampered by ill health.

The Land of Bolivar

In his last years James worked hard on his book, *The Land of Bolivar*, published in the early summer of 1878. This is an immensely readable two-volume account of his experiences in Venezuela. James lived just long enough to see his handsome book well received.

James generously acknowledged WEAA in the Preface, 'Mr. William E. A. Axon, M.R.S.L., has rendered most valuable aid, from his familiarity with the language and history of Spanish America.' In addition, one of the Appendices was written by WEAA, *The Spanish Poetry of South America*.

According to Ernest WEAA had indeed assisted James with the book, and 'had for long been interested in Spanish America.' In 1929 Ernest offered WEAA's collection of twenty Simon Bolivar letters to the Venezuelan Embassy in London.[410] Old Peter Spence had been a devotee of Simon Bolivar too.

James seems to have been a charming man. He appreciated the talents of others and particularly supported the artist, Ramon Bolet. It is satisfying that this enterprising Manchester Man brought to Venezuela his passion for public art exhibitions, one he shared with WEAA. His initiative in setting up the very first art exhibition in Venezuela is described in *The Land of Bolivar*, both in the main text and in an Appendix, *The First Venezuelan Fine Arts Exhibition,* translated from *La Opinion Nacional*. The exhibition was on an impressive scale and had a lasting impact on the development of Venezuelan art.

There are three letters and a postcard from James to WEAA in AP. The first, dated 25 July 1873, is remarkable for the tone of easy and light affection. James was keen that WEAA instead of staying in town on his holidays

should ‘accompany me to some quiet sea side place say in North Wales where we can have pure air, and quietude, and being away from the noise and turmoil of Manchester life, we can make or spin better materials than we could if we stayed here.’ He ends by mentioning he has ordered the office to make out a cheque for WEAA ‘for the amount due.’[411]

So was WEAA already undertaking work for the Spences or does this relate to another matter entirely? It is odd to imagine the frail WEAA in the company of this intrepid mountaineer, albeit one who was suffering ill health.

On 15 January 1877 James confided in WEAA that there had not been an encouraging response to the prospectuses for *The Land of Bolivar*. Ten days later he wrote about the reviews for *The Land of Bolivar*, hoping WEAA would review it for *The Academy* and then congratulating him on the *Guardian* article on Manchester Libraries, presuming it must be his as no one else could do it ‘with so much skill.’ He remarks how much better it is to have the Reference Library at the nearby Town Hall, and to be spared the ‘horrid walk’ to Campfield, a telling opinion of the sordid area around Campfield from a man familiar with so many dangerous places in the Americas.[412]

On 27 August 1878 Frank wrote to WEAA, relaying the details of the distressing circumstances of James' death. His sister Mary had visited James after he had an operation in London. All seemed well. However, he collapsed and died alone at Herne Bay, only comforted by the kindness of strangers.

Frank found consolation for James' end in the grim tenets of his and his father's religion, 'we are ourselves convinced that a life of almost unbroken earthly failure was the means (perhaps the only ones) in God's hand to secure the answer to his sainted mother's prayers and bring him amid cloud and sorrow to take the unspeakable gift of Eternal Life in Christ.'[413]

Frank: Francis Mudie Spence (1837-1907)
Frank, Peter's second son, provided him with steady and unfaltering support. Like his father, Frank was a trained chemist, taught at one stage by Edward Frankland, first professor of chemistry at Owens.

Frank was a strong promoter of the Manchester Ship Canal, another bond with WEAA who admired the enterprise. Frank's letter to the *Guardian* on 20 December 1882 gives the measure of the man, an expert and principled denunciation of focusing of private profit in transport networks.

He was a good friend and associate of WEAA's, and although there is only intermittent correspondence over the years the tone is

always warm and the topics cover mutual interests in Roman Lancashire, tracts, patent reform, anti-pollution measures, temperance, and anti-tobacco. The first letter preserved in AP, dated 7 July 1871, is full of much conspiratorial chat in reference to the formidable Mr Woodcroft of the Patent Office, and the newspaper editor Alexander Ireland. Frank speculates whether Woodcroft will recognise WEAA's handwriting. What is going on is a mystery but clearly Frank and WEAA are in cahoots and enjoying misleading Mr Woodcroft. Frank refers easily to WEAA's background, 'He identifies you as Mr Axon Assistant Lib. of Manchester Free Libraries but it does not occur to him that you are self-taught or spring from or identify with the working classes.'[414]

A few weeks following his emotional letter to WEAA, recounting James Mudie's death, Frank wrote as a watchful businessman, concerned WEAA was making use of private information. This seems to be in relation to WEAA's campaign for the opening of public institutions on Sunday, Frank confirmed there was no Sabbath working at Pendleton Alum.

Frank Spence sought WEAA's advice on helping his father cope with illness. He was grateful to WEAA for suggesting mesmerism and for putting him in touch with an old library colleague, Susan Rhodes, because she

had tried this remedy for her own father. Frank wrote on 3 July 1883, 'The lady whom she was at so much trouble to find although not having the strictly mesmeric gift or power to induce sleep has greatly sorted my father's nervous system by her method and during last night his physical difficulty of breathing was unaccompanied by anything like distress.'[415]

In the last letter preserved, dated 15 January 1904, Frank wrote, 'My wife and I greatly admired your admirable verses some time ago in the British Weekly.'[416]

The correspondence indicates that WEAA and Frank Spence, although of very different occupations and material wealth, worked together over the years in activities linked to patents, temperance, anti-tobacco, and literature. Wisely Frank was not connected to The Antilles or The West Indian, but he may well have recommended or endorsed WEAA for the posts of secretary.

Mrs Tom Kelly

Mrs Tom Kelly was Peter Spence's daughter Mary, and unlike his other daughters, Jessie and Maggie, she did not bring him grief through her choice of husband. Tom Kelly was an artist, and illustrator of his wife's works.

In September 1881 Mrs Tom Kelly wrote to WEAA asking him to proofread and revise the 898 pages of her draft novel *Time and Chance*. In the following weeks WEAA accomplished this immense task, earning the author's gratitude for his alterations, suggestions for

better words and for an improved ending. Mrs Tom Kelly followed WEAA's advice, and on 11 November sent him a cheque for five pounds with 'much gratitude for your kindness.'[417] A few months later, on 4 April 1882, she shared the reviews with him, remarking with good humour that WEAA's own paper, the *Guardian*, had not produced a review. *Time and Chance* received mixed reactions but the 'apparently faithful picture of life in the African diamond fields' was generally appreciated. The same reviewer pointed out that 'Such a shy and young ladylike lot of young men are not often brought into being by a lady's pen. A plain question would frighten them: a plain "yes" would seem likely to kill them.'[418]

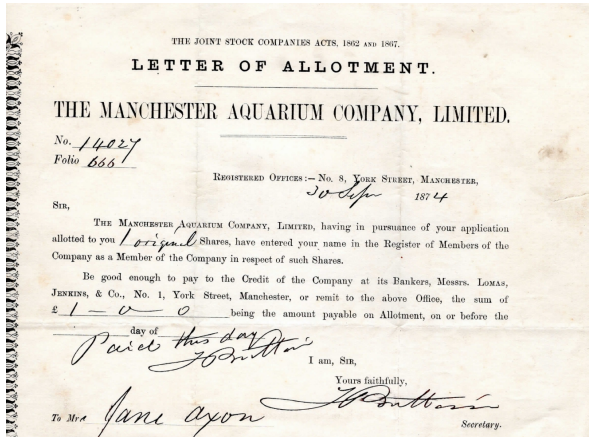
Mary's correspondence with WEAA is warm in tone; she shared family as well as literary news with WEAA. She also wrote a Scottish dialect novel, *A Leddy in Her Ain Richt*, hopefully not with WEAA's encouragement, as this earned her the comment that she had 'done her best to frighten away her readers.'[419] In his last letter to WEAA, Frank sent WEAA Mrs Tom Kelly's address but why WEAA needed to be in contact is not known.

The Manchester Aquarium

WEAA occasionally dabbled in investments but with caution. He only had two shares in the West Indies company.

He was attracted by the science and the potential profits of the exciting new world of marine aquaria, a craze that surged in the 1860s. WEAA and the Spences invested in the London Aquarium Company. They then joined a local consortium of businessmen and marine biologists to launch a commercial aquarium, the Manchester Aquarium Company Ltd. WEAA contacted William Lloyd, keeper of the spectacular Crystal Palace Aquarium, for advice, one of the odder AP exchanges, and the Manchester Aquarium opened in 1874.

There was little chance of success. Like several other commercial aquariums, the Manchester Aquarium had come on the scene too late. By the mid 1870s the aquarium craze was in decline. The demands of maintenance and renewal of stock resulted in unattractive 'barren and turbid aquaria.'[420] Public interest waned, and most of the enterprises folded. Within three years of opening the Manchester Aquarium failed. Jane Axon's one pound share certificate in AFB is a rare relic of the Manchester Aquarium.



THE JOINT STOCK COMPANIES ACTS, 1862 AND 1867.

LETTER OF ALLOTMENT.

THE MANCHESTER AQUARIUM COMPANY, LIMITED.

No. 14027
Folio 666

REGISTERED OFFICES:—No. 8, YORK STREET, MANCHESTER,
30 Sept 1874

SIR,

THE MANCHESTER AQUARIUM COMPANY, LIMITED, having in pursuance of your application allotted to you 1 original Shares, have entered your name in the Register of Members of the Company as a Member of the Company in respect of such Shares.

Be good enough to pay to the Credit of the Company at its Bankers, Messrs. LOMAS, JENKINS, & Co., No. 1, York Street, Manchester, or remit to the above Office, the sum of £ 1 — 0 — 0 being the amount payable on Allotment, on or before the day of Paid this day J.O. Bultow

I am, SIR,

Yours faithfully,

J.O. Bultow
Secretary.

To Mrs Jane Ayon

Bizarrely the Manchester Aquarium was bought by the Catholic school, St. Bede's, seemingly at the urging of WEAA's friend Casartelli, then a Father on the senior staff. Casartelli was keen on commercial education and believed museums should play a part. In fact, the location for the school had been chosen originally for its proximity to the Aquarium on Alexander Road. Casartelli was appointed Aquarium curator. The dark tanks still did not appeal to Mancunians as an escape from the smoke-choked streets, 'There was something depressing in that silent solitude of fish and reptiles.'[421] Despite Casartelli's efforts and those of the headmaster, Bishop Vaughan, a supposed expert in alligators from his experiences in South America, maintaining the Aquarium for

the boys' education and infrequent visitors did not work out. Two months after the purchase the Aquarium was closed to the public and disbanded. An exciting legend was created when an escaped alligator was shot, stuffed, and exhibited in the school museum.

The Manchester Aquarium provided WEAA with an episode for his *Round of the Clock in Manchester*, published in the *Manchester Weekly Post* throughout 1876. WEAA was enthralled by everything. The palatial hall of the Aquarium, the dim lights, the walls of glass separating viewers from the walls of water, the tidal flow produced by the donkey engine in the cellar, the whole weird fantastical underwater world enraptured him as a fairy land. Yet he picks up on the brutality, memorably likening the stickleback whose eyes have been gouged out by her vicious partner to the poor women maimed and disfigured by their husbands, WEAA sadly observed that of the sticklebacks that, 'The story reads like a page from a police report.'

Naïve or Shrewd?

Was WEAA naïve to believe that he had a future with the Antilles or was he deliberately taking the gamble to pursue a career as a

writer? Was he aware of how risky the enterprise was? WEAA knew an immense number of people through his networks. According to some he took time over his friendships with only a select few at the core. F E Hamer wrote of him, 'He did not admit people readily into the inner circle of his friendship, but once admitted they remained there.'[422] In theory WEAA was aware of the difference between trusted and fair-weather friends, in line with Hamer's observation. It was one of the themes in his book of advice, *How to Succeed in the World*. However, some felt he had an over trusting nature. A W Duncan noted, 'He was so tolerant of the faults of his friends that he sometimes seemed unaware of failings that were obvious to others, and his generous nature was at times imposed on.'[423]

His son-in-law, Joe Haddow, described how WEAA fell into financial difficulty by putting his name to a friend's promissory note. The friend's daughter, Florence, was then forced into dreadful circumstances, her home gone, and working all hours for a pittance. She was rescued by the Axons, sharing a room with WEAA's eldest daughter Sophie, protected

until her father regained his position. There is no lack of examples of WEAA's kindness on behalf of his friends but his cheerful generosity to Florence despite the damage her father had caused him is striking. It would appear WEAA was loyal even when circumstances were weighted against whoever he was championing. The police thought little of his evidence in the case concerning a childhood acquaintance, Peter Pownall, who was seen by several witnesses to be picking pockets. WEAA spoke up for the man's blameless character, suggesting 'that it was a mistake on the part of the police, and that in the prisoner's excitement, if such were the case, his actions had been misjudged by the police.'[424] Unsurprisingly Pownall was charged. WEAA and Pownall's foreman, Mr. Horrocks stood bail. It might be that Peter Pownall was related to his adopted mother's family as a newspaper cutting of this odd event in WEAA's history has been preserved in AFB.

My assessment is that WEAA was trusting by nature, grew shrewder through experience but still preferred to give people the benefit of the doubt. In 1908 WEAA added a note to a

begging letter from a G R Gibbs, ‘An imposter I fear.’[425] He had learnt to be more wary but even so referred two years later to a precept he had heard from Charles Dickens, ‘The hardest head may co-exist with the softest heart. The union, and just balance of these two is always a blessing.’[426]

The Royal Jubilee Exhibition, Manchester, 1887

Manchester citizens had planned to host an industrial exhibition in 1857. When they approached Prince Albert for royal patronage, he persuaded them instead to collect art from around the world for an exhibition. The resulting Art Treasures Exhibition was on a still unsurpassed scale of 16,000 objects, attracting one and a half million visitors, and changing the course of art history. Even so the wish persisted to host an exhibition of the city’s great industries. Manchester manufacturing and Manchester goods had been showcased at many exhibitions in cities such as London, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Edinburgh, but never on the home ground. In 1886 a Mr. Ellis Lever spearheaded a push for a Manchester Jubilee Exhibition to represent local manufacturing and industry as well as the arts. Despite the doubters who felt the days of ‘monster Exhibitions’ were over the

plan went ahead. The aim was, ‘the commemoration of the fiftieth year of Her Majesty’s reign by the illustration of the progress of Art and some important Industries during the half-century.’[427] The Exhibition encompassed the Botanical Gardens, close to the original site of the Art Treasures at Old Trafford. From 3 May to 5 November, over four million visitors enjoyed the education and the fun.
WEAA was on the list of subscribers for the souvenir book. The Exhibition held much that was relevant to him, including one exhibit that reflected his brief brush with the chemical industry, and one that reflected his lifelong fascination with the historic landmarks of Manchester. The most astonishing sight in the Chemistry Section was a colossal ten-ton block of alum, the splendid cylinder that belonged to Messrs. Peter Spence and Sons, of the Manchester Alum Works. The journalists waxed lyrical, ‘Its beautifully-white translucent tint gives it a majestic and imposing appearance. In the interior are to be seen pendant stalactite crystals formed naturally in the process of manufacture.’[428]

Old Manchester also formed a stunning part of

the show. WEAA was one of the advisors on behalf of the LCAS. Market-Sted Lane in the grounds of the Botanical Gardens was created as a sort of time travel through Manchester history, ‘a wonderfully delightful jumble of incongruities was the reproduction of certain portions of Old Manchester and Salford, and the popularity was immense.’[429] The Old Manchester exhibit was not forgotten. The LCAS held an immensely popular free exhibition of Manchester history at the Art Gallery in 1904, attracting an estimated 40,000 visitors. At the closing soirée Professor Boyd Dawkins raised a strong plea for a permanent museum to tell the story of Manchester. WEAA and George Milner instantly gave support. WEAA spoke of the impact of the Old Manchester Exhibition, and the need for a great library and museum in the city centre, ‘He thought it very important that one should strive to deepen the historic senses in our people.’[430] WEAA became a member of the Old Manchester Committee, contributing to the acquisition of objects.[431] An embroidered silk map of England and Wales, dared 1819, was a neighbour’s gift to him as a child. It is now one of the treasures of the Old

Manchester collection at the Art Gallery.[432]

CHAPTER 12

OLD SONGS, OLD SAWS, OLD WORDS AND USAGES

WEAA's *Local Notes and Queries* Column

WEAA had developed a portfolio of income generating activities; the secretarial work with the Spences, journalism, and ongoing publishing projects. Even after the collapse of the Antilles, he managed to support his family on the strength of his weekly *Guardian LNQ* column. *LNQ* lasted from 5 January 1874 through to 1 October 1877: however, WEAA's association with the *Guardian* continued until 1905.

The *Guardian* and C P Scott

Few newspapers have been recorded as comprehensively as the *Guardian*. There are biographies of individual editors and journalists as well as reminiscences in various memoirs, testifying to the hold the *Guardian* had on staff and readers alike, especially in its Manchester heyday. It even has its own biography, [433] and the archive has recently been catalogued at JRL.

The *Guardian* has the ability, in the past as much as in the twentieth-first century, simultaneously to command loyalty from its readers, and to alienate them through stubborn adherence to unacceptable views. Being a *Guardian* reader is now a recognised label, alluding to the more enlightened members of what WEAA and others referred to as the 'comfortable classes.' It has sometimes been viewed as a newspaper that betrayed stalwart radical origins. Of course, its history is far more complex than that, and from its start in 1821, famously in response to Peterloo, it was more cautiously Whig than radical, committed to reform but not in any extreme fashion.

Many outstanding men and women have been involved in the *Guardian* over the three centuries of its existence, and they have significantly raised the standards for journalism. Amongst the notable names from the early nineteenth century are the founder John Edward Taylor, his partner Jeremiah Garnett, and John Harland. John Edward Taylor, the younger, took over the paper in 1861, acting as editor until 1872. Active in the politics of the newspaper industry he

campaigned against news monopolies and founded the Press Association. Much of his time was spent in London and the *Guardian* 'passed into a long dark tunnel.'[434] John Edward Taylor recognised the paper needed stronger direction than he could provide. Unexpectedly, he fixed on a much younger man with no experience as his successor, his young cousin, Charles Prestwich Scott, a promising second-year Oxford undergraduate. After six months of training with the *Scotsman*, on 9 February 1871, C P Scott joined the *Guardian*, just in time to join in the fiftieth-year celebrations.

C P Scott was severe, determined, and demanding. A charismatic leader, he transformed the *Guardian* into a national newspaper. Gradually both C P Scott and the *Guardian* shifted from centre to left politically, playing a critical role in the modernisation of the Liberal Party. C P Scott was not afraid of taking an unpopular line. The *Guardian* stood for Home Rule, support for major strikes, and took an anti-war stance in the Boer War, losing readership as well as staff being threatened with physical violence. Between 1895 and 1906 C P Scott was Liberal MP for

Leigh.

He was editor for fifty-seven and a half years and even after his retirement in 1929 remained as Governing Director, regularly attending the *Guardian* offices in the evening. The white bearded old man on his bicycle, riding along Oxford Road to the *Guardian* office, was a Manchester legend. My mother often cycled along with him on her way to Withington Girls' School, founded incidentally by the *Guardian* dynastic families. The editor W P Crozier gave a memorable picture of this exacting but generous man, supremely sure of himself and his role.[435] According to Crozier, Scott was a ruthless autocrat who demanded clear, vigorous prose and 'made war on woolliness.' WEAA was a professional writer, well versed in producing whatever style was required. Some of his pieces earned rare praise from C P Scott.

The 'Little Scheme' of Local Notes and Queries in the *Guardian*

In the early years the *Guardian* dealt with queries through the column *Notices to Correspondents*. However, it was a brave reader who ventured to contact the editor for the

replies were curt, rude, and sometimes brutally humorous. Poets had their verses rejected, questions were dismissed as odd, or the editor has neither the time nor inclination to find out. Humiliation was public: on the 30 September 1840 the Bard of Colour, Robert Rose, was forbidden to communicate, 'We have no intention of noticing his book, and do not desire any communication with him.'

In 1868, T T Wilkinson wrote to the *Guardian* on the topic of *Doctor Watson's Remains*. He suggested that 'your journal would prove a very useful medium for proposing a few notes and queries respecting local matters.' The editor, John Taylor, snubbed him, 'It must be understood that we can insert communications of this kind only when they contain, or are intended to elicit, information which is not obtainable from ordinary sources, and which is not wholly trivial in its nature.'[436] It was another reader, WEAA, who courteously replied to Wilkinson's query. His letter was printed in the next issue. WEAA wrote, 'The editor of "The Spirit of the Doctor" was David William Paynter, the author of the "Humours of Trim". In Mr. Proctor's charming book, "Literary Reminiscences and Gleanings," there

are many interesting particulars of these two Manchester worthies.'[437]

Nothing more transpired until the new editor, C P Scott, took up the idea of a notes and queries feature in late 1873. It would be interesting to know what first prompted this change of policy. One possibility is WEAA's friend, John Potter Briscoe, Chief Librarian at Nottingham. Briscoe had taken the initiative in getting the *Nottinghamshire Guardian* to run such a feature, writing about this to WEAA on the 13 October 1873, 'We have recently started a column in the [Nottinghamshire] Guardian for preserving all we can of old customs tc. tc. we could. We have a pretty good list of contributors and have already do much good in "ferreting" out information by queries tc.'[438]

Briscoe had previously worked at Bolton Free Library and knew the Lancashire scene well. It is quite possible that WEAA passed the news on to C P Scott. The invitation for WEAA to set up a similar column came only a few weeks later. WEAA's weekly column was the first in Manchester, soon followed by WEAA's old print comrades, J P Earwaker in the *Manchester Courier*, and J H Nodal in the *Manchester City News*.

However, a local notes and queries feature

was an obvious development. The success of the original *N&Q* had led to many imitations. As Alan J Kidd wrote, 'An important element in the burgeoning local history culture of the mid-Victorian period was the existence, albeit fitful, of several local history publications and newspaper columns.'[439]

C P Scott was intent on developing the *Guardian* into a national and even international newspaper. He brought in several men of similar Oxford background to himself. Through these talented men and through his team of foreign and war correspondents, the *Guardian* moved on from reporting other men's words to having an influential voice itself. But C P Scott was also determined to turn the *Guardian* into the main newspaper in Manchester, and he appreciated the importance of the local knowledge that WEAA and others could supply. He took time in selecting staff, looking at their work, their achievements, and personal impressions, not relying solely on interviews which could be treacherous, 'It has been said that he chose men well. Certainly, he almost always chose them with great caution.' [440]

WEAA was by now a notable figure on the Manchester literary and scholarly scene: it was not surprising that C P Scott picked him out as a potential editor for a local notes and queries feature. The first approach was made through Harry Rawson, member of the Library Committee, later an alderman and always a good friend to WEAA. Rawson sounded out WEAA on C P Scott's behalf on the morning of 4 December 1873, and C P Scott followed this up on the same day, inviting WEAA to visit him to discuss the 'little scheme.' [441] WEAA wasted no time. He accepted the offer, resigned his post as Sub Librarian, took up the Antilles post and produced the first *LNQ* feature on 5 January 1874.

Friends' Support

Only close family, friends, and colleagues knew that WEAA was the editor of the Guardian's *LNQ*. At this stage, newspaper content was generally unnamed. This left WEAA free to appear as a regular correspondent in his own *LNQ* under such labels as William E A Axon, W E A Axon, WEAA. A of Rusholme and Dudley Armi(y)tage. In some weeks, especially in the holiday season, the editor and his alter egos

are responsible for much of the *LNQ* content. WEAA/Dudley Armitage wrote most of the issue for 27 July 1874.

Once they heard the news, WEAA's friends were swift to offer their support, generously sharing information and sending in queries. T T Wilkinson was the first, expressing pleasure that WEAA was running *LNQ*, and offering his query on the Eagle Crag at Todmorden. J P Earwaker, the Manchester born Oxford scholar, sent in his suggestions. The Rev. Thomas Whitaker referred to the copious material left by John Higson. WEAA's correspondents J F Smith, Richard Christie, and John Davies in Hampstead, L G Ghent in London all offered help. John Bone was willing for him to 'work up my ballads.'[442] Leo Grindon, the Manchester botanist, contributed a detailed look at moors, mosses and heaths, stimulating debates about that emotive subject, local place names. From his retirement on the Isle of Man, the antiquarian William Harrison sent in Lancashire sayings for WEAA to use, and Jas Kendrick posted a bundle of printed slips, surviving from when he had started a notes and queries feature in Warrington years ago. Llewellynn Jewett of

The Reliquary wrote, chasing up a copy of WEAA's *Nixon's Prophecies,* and remarked he was very glad the column was in WEAA's hands. In his letter dated 27 June 1874,[443] Bowker in Dublin was ready to contribute to WEAA's *LNQ* in the *Guardian* or to other columns, offering pieces on birds, flowers, or comical accounts of holidays.[444]

From the beginning, names familiar from the AP correspondence appear, either people already significant to WEAA or destined to become so. As well as those already mentioned there was the Hull publisher William Andrews, the antiquarian John Eglington Bailey, WEAA's old friend Fred J Faraday, 'long on the staff of the "Manchester Guardian,"'[445], the folklorist Felix Liebrecht of Lüttich, the curate from Yorkshire John Pickford, now a Rector at Woodbridge, the artist and architect Charles Rowley, and Sylvan (R W Procter). All rallied around. Respectful references were made to the late John Higson who had become almost a presiding spirit of the enterprise. Indeed, his son James, later a member of LCAS, contributed to the columns with mentions of Longsight Hall, known as a boggart house, an altar tomb in a garden in

Gorton, an eccentric Calvinist, and a query on parish highways. It is apparent that throughout the series, WEAA's friends regularly provided copy, sometimes under different names or initials.

WEAA's wife, Jane, contributed too. I have found two entries under 'Jane' but there may be more under other guises. Jane's folklore entry is excellent, a recording of a rather sinister child's game, *The Priest and the Penitent*. She comments slyly it has been missed by 'those grave antiquaries who have paid special attention to nursery rhymes.' C P Scott had been right in his choice. WEAA's *LNQ* formed a roll call of antiquarian names, ranging from Lancashire to European scholars.

WEAA's Column

LNQ ran as a two-column weekly feature. Each entry within the column was numbered, making it easier for correspondents to refer to a previous topic. It appeared on each Monday though some weeks were missed in 1876 and 1877. Urgent reports of the Russo-Turkish War disrupted its regularity during 1877. Some entries were apparently written but never made it to press for numbers 1288 to 1292 and 1297 to 1301 are missing from the

sequence. *LNQ* made its final appearance with number 1307 on 1 October 1877.

Alan J Kidd wrote that the weekly column was 'reprinted each week in a four-page booklet and subsequently in an annual volume.'[446] The collected *LNQ* was also issued as a book but according to Walmsley, only twenty-five copies were printed so it is extremely rare. There is a letter from James Crossley to WEAA in AP, dated 13 February 1877, dramatically portraying his quest, presumably for an annual, 'I begin to dispair [sic] of seeing you for I have called two or three times at the Guardian Office at the hazard of precipitation into the yawning spaces, where, I suppose, the printer Devils live, without being able to track you out. To whom can I pay the £1.1 for the Guardian Local Notes!'[447] This would have been the old Cross Street building, due for demolition in 1879.

First Issue

In the very first issue WEAA as the anonymous editor verged on the 'woolly' that C P Scott abjured. It is likely C P Scott had a word with him as he never repeated such a discursive ramble. WEAA's later editorial notes could sometimes be overlong in their scholarly detail but they were not flowery.

His 'woolly' ramble in the first issue was on the topic of the value of newspapers, not just at the breakfast table, but to future historians. Despite the style, the points he made are fresh and perceptive.

WEAA was spot on in realising that even advertisements might be important to future researchers. A century later, staff at the BL Newspaper Library were aware that readers constantly sought out advertisements because they served all sorts of research purposes from fashion to theatrical appearances. WEAA comprehensively covered the sources that researchers now value:

> ‘Old songs, old saws, old words and usages, sayings and doings of half-forgotten worthies, unrecorded incidents in the lives of famous men, all these yet live in tradition and in memory; they live to-day, to-morrow, if still uncared for, they will die. Hidden, too, in rare books or unpublished manuscripts, huddled away among dust-covered volumes on neglected shelves, or lost in our own back files, lies much matter to which age has given but fresh interest. What memories do not lie even in the half-dozen lines of an old advertisement?’[448]

The very first issue is typical of the material that appears throughout the series. WEAA pointed out in his introduction that without his contributors so much of value would be lost.

> The first item in the first issue is from a correspondent ‘C’ who must be James Crossley. It relates to one of Crossley’s well-known interests, the unpublished autobiography of the old bookseller James Weatherley. An extract is given from

Weatherley's narration of his schooldays at Manchester Grammar School in 1803. The second entry from 'J. P. Morris, Liverpool' is the text of *The Nine Joys of Our Lady* carol, recorded from an old lady in Furness. The third is about William Hulme's Monument in Manchester, the fourth concerns an obscure local Derbyshire poet Leonard Wheatcroft, with a reply from the editor giving some sources. Fifth is the bewitching of a young man in Manchester, sixth the Lancashire word 'portin' with a reply from the editor, then seventh a query from Sylvan (R W Procter) on a Manchester author Gregson and his *Gimcrackiana*. William Andrews sent in number eight, a description of the custom of Candlemas Gills in Horbury, nine is from 'W' on the name of Eagle Crag in the Vale of Todmorden – 'W' being T T Wilkinson. Ten is from 'A.A.' of Dukinfield, wanting to know about a Broughton artist Le Cave, eleven is a query from Sylvan on James Hargreaves of the Spinning Jenny, twelve a query from a 'W.A.' on the Yorkshire poet, Thomas Pearson. 'W.A.' was likely to be William Andrews. Thirteen, from C.H. Ostler, concerns a painting in the Chetham's Library, fourteen is from the editor

of the *Yorkshire Garland* wanting to know where the rush cart is still brought round, fifteen is again 'W.A.' about funeral garlands for unmarried women, and finally, as item sixteen, is T T W's mind-blowing puzzle from a flyleaf of an old book. Dating back to at least 1736 this is a riddle of kinship, 'Yet but six corpses in all lie buried here, All born legitimate-from incest clear.'

Several of these items are still topical today. *The Nine Joys of Our Lady* was revived by Steeleye Span and other folk musicians, dialect still intrigues, rush bearing has been revived in Gorton, and in 2021, there was the great event of James Weatherley's 'amusing autobiography', being published by The Chetham Society. [449]

Content

The richest columns in WEAA's *LNQ* display a good mix of topics, eyewitness accounts, fresh discoveries, and voices captured from the past. Responding to a vivid account of bullbaiting in Rochdale when the parapet collapsed, causing injuries and deaths, 'C S' remembered how he rushed out from school and paid 'some small coin and went upstairs to see the body' of one of those killed. Another detailed debate over

the path of the River Tib ends with the recollection, ‘Many years ago an old resident in the neighbourhood, hearing some young men holding forth about the source and the course of the Tib, interrupted them by saying, “River Tib, river Tib, why it rises in a sink gutter a bit fur on tin eawr heawse, an’au’ve seen it stopped none week wi’ a cabbage stalk.”’ Pretty much the same observation was made on Twitter when the sink hole to the Tib was exposed temporarily.

Much of the subject matter is familiar *N&Q* territory, with WEAA placing the focus overall on antiquarian, topographical, and bibliographical rather than on dialect or folklore. Yet there is a Manchester flavour with engineers, botanists, geologists, and architects all having input and producing a startling range of topics. The technical infrastructure of the city fascinated the correspondents with many an argument over the evolution of street, drainage, and foundations. The correspondents were generally courteous to each other in disputes although Fred Faraday did lose his temper when he believed the Rev. John Davies was dismissing them as ‘ignorant northerners.’

At its best, WEAA's column is an engrossing and sometimes spine-chilling read. Not all the mysteries are solved and some, like the macabre haunted houses with bloodstained gold called 'Babby Heawses,' remain a haunting puzzle.[450] At its worst, the columns can be repetitive with the topics reappearing until they become stale, and sometimes there is overwhelming detail in the editor's reply. Tracking through WEAA's columns, I have been conscious of how much is relevant and valuable to current researchers in a variety of fields. Many researchers trawl through *N&Q* itself, but the local versions also contain real riches. Certainly, WEAA made use of some of the information in his later books, for example, in his detailed account in *Lancashire Gleanings* of the Westhoughton Factory Fire and the execution of the rioters, including tragically a young boy.[451] Some Manchester legends may owe their continuing fame to their airings in his columns, such as William Harrison's writing in from the isle of Man to recall Spanking Roger Aytoun.

The Guardian revived *LNQ* over a hundred years later in 1989, marketed as a 'new information exchange'. It survived until 1998.

As in WEAA's time, 'experts in every imaginable field: other *Guardian* readers,'[452]provided many of the answers. The revived column did not compare well with WEAA's in terms of scholarly debate or variety of curiosities.

Poaching

WEAA's growing reputation brought him new opportunities as well as furthering his friendships in antiquarian and local history circles. J P Earwaker as editor of the *Manchester Courier* had been entrusted with setting up a new Local Gleanings feature. He approached WEAA in confidence to see if he might help, 'I do not know how far your arrangements with the *Guardian* will permit you to assist me in this matter.' He offered a handsome two guinea rate per column. It would seem WEAA agreed to moonlight as he later requested Earwaker to send him reprints, very much WEAA's custom for his published articles.

CHAPTER 13

HILLTOP OF LIFE

Praise from Smiles

WEAA stayed in touch with his old boss, R W Smiles. They were both members of IOGT, and both rather dissatisfied with the movement. In two letters in the autumn of 1888, Smiles discussed Robert Burns, WEAA's sonnets, IOGT, the Band of Hope, licensing laws, and WEAA's article on William Muir in the *Guardian*, a neat example of how AP correspondence brings WEAA's unnamed pieces to light. Smiles reminisced how much had changed since they had first met, a quarter of a century ago, 'you were little more than a lad then – now you are on the hill top of life.'[453]

Ironically in the same year Smiles wrote of the hilltop, WEAA's family life was already slipping into the crisis that would end in 1889 with Jane's death. Yet Smiles was right to praise WEAA's progress in these years. In the period of 1874 to 1891, WEAA consolidated his career as professional writer with his

Guardian post and substantial book publications. His status as a Manchester Man was confirmed by his featuring in the prestigious *Manchester Faces and Places* in 1892, together with a photographic portrait taken by his friend H J Godbold in Hastings. [454]

WEAA had taken his place amongst the intelligentsia and leading lights of the city. AFB chronicled WEAA's considerable progress in this period in joining even more societies. As well as bringing reform through organisations like VS and IOGT, WEAA was energetically engaged in improving city life.

Sunday Opening

In 1867 Harry Rawson encountered 'an outbreak of Sabbatarian bigotry' in innocuously advocating Sunday bands in the parks.[455] A growing movement centred on the vexed question of Sunday opening for galleries, libraries, and museums: campaigns exploded across the country and there were bitter conflicts over the issue. WEAA was Hon. Secretary of the ad hoc group of Manchester men who first raised the issue in 1877, later formalised as the Manchester and Salford Sunday Opening Society.

Names familiar from WEAA's various networks populate the Executive Committee: Alexander Ireland, the Rev. W A O'Connor, Dr Pankhurst,

Harry Rawson, the Rev. S A Steinthal and Dr Watts among them. WEAA was a passionate believer in the rights of working people to enjoy art and books on a Sunday, as the middle classes could do at home. He threw himself into the movement, presenting petitions to Parliament, trying to get motions through the LA, collecting statistics, giving talks, publishing papers, and sending letters to the newspapers. Like the other campaigners he encountered much hostility; at the LA he was even sneered at for not being a public librarian, 'Mr. Overall said that Mr. Axon was not a public librarian, and he therefore naturally took a different view to that which was taken by public librarians of the question.'[456]

The Manchester campaigners were aware of the ironic situation of the lack of actual galleries and museums to open on a Sunday, 'As to museums and art galleries they were in an unfortunate position, for, with the exception of the very small collection in Queens Park, there were none in the city.'[457] Interestingly, the Queens Park Museum, established in 1864, had shocked many by opening on Good Friday and Christmas Day in

1866. Later WEAA was on the committee.

The campaign was relentlessly pushed by WEAA and his comrades. Henry H. Howorth as Chairman and WEAA as Secretary wrote an impassioned letter to the City Council, on behalf of the Manchester and Salford Sunday Society, battering the Council with a barrage of facts and figures as well as raising the emotional arguments of social inequality and deprivation.[458] They cited USA libraries with Sunday opening as well as British. Birmingham was the leader in 1872: a powerful weapon for persuading Manchester councillors not to fall behind. On 8 September 1878 all the Manchester libraries were opened on Sunday afternoons from 2pm to 9pm.

To everyone's surprise The Royal Institution which 'has never been regarded as revolutionary in spirit,' decided in October 1879 to open its art exhibitions freely to the public on Sunday afternoons. This development greatly alarmed the clergy of the Manchester Presbytery who saw it as the beginning of the end.[459]

Jane Axon published a vivid report in the *Sunday Review* of the Royal Institution's first

Sunday opening, on ‘a dull, cold, and cheerless day, over which wind and rain held alternate rule.’[460] 4500 people, mainly workers and artisans with their families, queued to see the paintings. Jane remarked on their patience, intelligence, and gratitude for the sight of ‘the fairy land of Art.’ She knew their hard lives and what lay behind ‘the careworn dame of sixty.’ Her emphasis on their exemplary behaviour is deliberate, pre-empting the middle-class fears that working people would be out of control.

WEAA’s article on the statistics of Sunday opening appears in the same issue. The *Sunday Review* was published by Trübner for The Sunday Society. As the voice of the movement the journal now provides a whole history of the campaigns for the Sunday opening of museums, art galleries, libraries, and gardens. It represents a very specific community of print.

WEAA’s paper, *Statistical Notes on the Sunday Opening of Libraries and Museums*, the text of a talk he gave to the MSS in 1879, is one of the most valuable documents of the early stages. It is an exuberant survey of American and

European experiences with Sunday opening, again with emphasis on behaviour as well as the triumphant figures. WEAA allowed himself a sly dig at the clerical establishment, 'It is even whispered that the rustle of episcopal lawn is occasionally heard at the Athenaeum [London] on Sundays.'[461]

WEAA had visionary ideals, always taking an optimistic view of humanity. He was, however, too experienced and pragmatic to blind himself to reality. He concluded this article with a statement that clearly marks his position:

> 'It would be foolish to claim millennial results. It is equally foolish to deny the good that is being done. Large sections of the people are unfortunately not educated up to the point of appreciating libraries, museums, or parks, either on week-days or on Sundays. In this, as in most other attempts at social amelioration, our hope must be with the young. It is something to give them a middle course between the stupidity of the so-called "Puritan" Sunday and the riot and debauchery of a public-house Sunday.'

Another of WEAA's talks, given to the Hanover Gallery in London on 27 June 1880, was printed in the same issue. In his *Sunday in Manchester* WEAA casts an informed look at public opinion in Manchester on the issue of Sabbatarian Sunday, at the pursuits of the artisan naturalists, the public enjoyment of parks, Botanical Gardens, the Aquarium at St Bede's, the free libraries, and the pictures at the Royal Institution on Sundays.

A letter from an MLC friend, Henry H Sales, shows that even in 1888 WEAA was associated with making Sundays enjoyable for hard working people. Sales asked him to help with an entertainment for the Mission Lads' Cricket Club, which he had been obliged to do by Miss Dickens, one of Charles Dickens' daughters. He added, 'Now I see by the local papers that you are a great Sunday recreation man (more power to your elbow) and that you have singing men and women to help you.'[462] Frustratingly, Sales does not identify the singers.

Incidentally it was as late as 1895 that Manchester Council submitted to public pressure and allowed voluntary bands in parks on fine Sunday afternoons. Harry Rawson as Chair of the Watch Committee in the 1890s had the pleasure of allowing several Sunday events, including 'sacred concerts' in theatres: he was well accustomed to the inevitable backlash of hostility.

Judging by the vitriolic letters in newspapers, not all accepted Sunday bands, even decades later, attributing them to a decline in Sunday School attendance. The same went for sport. My father remembered the police breaking up a Sunday cricket match in Platt Park in the 1920s. The battles to allow games on Sundays, from bowling, cricket through to municipal putting greens, were still raging a decade later. Sports perhaps did not have the moral weight of art galleries, libraries, and museums as recreation. WEAA was not narrow in his sympathies: although no sportsman, he supported lads who wanted to play cricket in their limited free time.

Sunday in Lancashire and Cheshire

Sunday in Lancashire and Cheshire is one of

WEAA's finest articles, a wonderful example of how he could combine a massive amount of scholarly research into a fascinating narrative. It covers mainstream, social, literary, and local history, full of detail that would delight the folklorists, and it has a very political aim. The tumbling scenes of villages, fairs, town wakes and gatherings are painted with a Brueghel like vigour. It is a masterpiece, full of the same spirited enjoyment that brought *The Black Knight* to glorious life. WEAA surveyed Sundays from the twelfth century down to his own day. There are mediaeval sermons, mystery plays, Lords of Misrule, maymarrions, naked Morris dancers wreathed in nets, the royal *Book of Sports*, gross banquets and frolics, Puritanical Sabbaths, Restoration sports and pastimes, alehouses, intense Sabbatarians, Sunday School banning of mathematics, and artisan naturalists. WEAA ends his forty four pages with the point he has been leading up to throughout, 'The opening of the public libraries of Manchester and Wigan on the first day of the week, are evidences that in the present day it is felt that the "Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," and that there is no harm,

but great good, in calling in the aid of art and knowledge as handmaids of true and practical religion.' [463] WEAA has turned Christ's words against the extreme Sabbatarians who would keep libraries closed.

Societies

This hilltop period was when WEAA joined many of his innumerable societies. On 3 November 1874, WEAA became an Ordinary member of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society.

THE
Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester,
instituted for the promotion of Science the Twenty eighth of February
One thousand Seven hundred and Eighty one, have this Day elected
you an Ordinary MEMBER, In Testimony whereof this Diploma
is sealed with the Seal of the Society, and signed by the
PRESIDENT, the PRESIDENTS and SECRETARIES.
Edward Schunck
William E.A. Axon MRSL

In the same year he was elected to the prestigious MLC. Most members would be already known to him, including old Crichton Club comrades like Fred Faraday and dialect writers like Ben Brierley and Edwin Waugh. He joined MSS around 1874, the year his papers first start appearing in the transactions. The wide social sciences remit of the statistical societies gave him a forum for looking at improving the lot of the 'deaf and dumb,' something that always haunted WEAA as a

barrier to communication. George W A Downing of the Adult Deaf and Dumb Society was delighted to hear WEAA's present his paper, 'I was not a little surprised to see the interest that was awakened by the points brought forward.'[464] WEAA resigned as MSS treasurer in 1882, with the 'strongest disappointment' that all members would be charged for wine at the annual dinner.[465] Other MSS temperance members were equally incandescent.

In 1877, he was elected to the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, on 9 November 1880 he joined the Salford Museum, Libraries and Park Committee, and on 24 November 1882 he was elected to the Salford School Board. He became a Life Member of the Manchester Scientific Students' Association in 1882, and a founder member of LCAS in 1883. As with other societies that WEAA helped found, there was no bar to women. He had risen to importance in the local temperance movements, becoming President of the Manchester and Salford Temperance Union in 1889, retaining this role to his death. in 1890, he also became Vice President, again until his death, of the Lancashire and Cheshire Band of Hope and Temperance Union.

On a national level, an important development for WEAA was the formation of the LA in 1877. He was a founding member, a member of the Council, a Fellow and twice Vice-President, the second time from 1908 until his death.

In 1889, he became Vice president of the English Anti-Tobacco Society and Anti-Narcotic League. 1881 he joined the British Association. In 1886 he was appointed as Honorary Deputy Grand Worthy Chief Templar in IOGT. AFB has the certificate, signed by the despotic UK President, Joseph Malins.

INDEPENDENT ORDER OF GOOD TEMPLARS.

THIS CERTIFIES that I, JOSEPH MALINS, GRAND WORTHY CHIEF TEMPLAR of the GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND, do issue this

COMMISSION

authorising Bro W. E. A. Axon to act as

Honorary Deputy Grand Worthy Chief Templar.

YOUR DUTIES ARE:

To act as Deputy within any District in this jurisdiction, as honorary deputation for the Grand Lodge at public gatherings, and as a visitor of Lodges, when requested to do so, &c. You possess by this Commission authority to organise and institute Lodges, by arrangement with the District Deputy, and to instal officers.

You will report at the close of each quarter direct to the Grand Worthy Chief Templar, on forms which will be sent to you for that purpose.

This Commission to take effect immediately, and remain in force until the Annual Session of Grand Lodge, Easter, 1887, unless sooner revoked by the Grand Worthy Chief Templar, or rendered null and void by violation of the pledge (Sec. 1, Art. 3, Sub-Lodge Constitution), in which case—as in case of withdrawal or accepted resignation—it must be returned to the G. W. C. T.

Witness my hand this 27th day of July
One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty Six

Joseph Malins G.W.C.T.

He was invited to become an examiner for Indian students in 1900, a duty that involved him in a great deal of work. He carried it all out conscientiously as well as inviting visiting students to his home.

Internationally there was a cluster of prestigious events. In 1875, through James Spence, he was elected corresponding member of the Caracas Society of Natural and Physical Science. In 1881, WEAA received a silver medal from the Société contre l'abus de Tabac in recognition of his pamphlets. These certificates are kept in AFB.

SOCIÉTÉ

CONTRE L'ABUS DU TABAC

CONCOURS DE 1881.

Le Conseil décerne une Médaille d'Argent
à Mr W.m Axon.

Paris, le 16 Avril 1882.

Le Fondateur

LE PRÉSIDENT — LE SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRAL

In 1886 according to AFB he became a corresponding member of the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia. There is no explanation for this although he had developed a good network in the USA from librarians, African Americans, through to the Rev Henry Stephens Clubb, President of the American Vegetarian

Society and minister of the Bible Christian Church in Philadelphia. In 1886 he was elected unanimously as an honorary member to the Northwestern Literary and Historical Society of Sioux City. The AFB letter from the Society explained this was to express 'recognition of the value of your bibliographical work.'

WEAA's friend Casartelli was involved in a similar complex mixture of societies, driven in his case by scholarship and by the need to raise the Catholic profile in Manchester civic affairs. WEAA enjoyed the fellowship and opportunities of the societies, but he was also motivated as a journalist. His *Guardian* commission in 1874 promoted his rush of new memberships. Being at the heart of these societies reinforced his value. Through the societies, he kept up to date with events, socialised with leading citizens, and the prestige of his innumerable papers and pamphlets reflected well on a newspaper that took pride in its distinguished men.

All these societies provided yet further communities of print for WEAA. He had become expert in the printing and publishing of society journals, the reproduction of his papers as pamphlets through local publishers, printers, and distribution channels. He took on tasks of editorship. He edited the *Manchester Quarterly* for the MLC from 1882 to 1888 and in 1888 was Editor in Charge for the *VM*, the journal of the VS.

Lecturer and Preacher

One consistent thread in AP is the demand for WEAA as a lecturer and as a sort of lay preacher. As well as the papers he read at societies, the best later printed in journals, as pamphlets or in book collections, WEAA regularly gave talks at local churches, halls, Sunday Schools, and other community platforms. This busy aspect of his life emerges through the regular invitations in AP, and the compliments given afterwards. There are mentions of fees and rail expenses, but WEAA would also have given freely to organisations like the Ancoats Art Museum. Local newspapers frequently describe him as an entertaining and instructive speaker. As a librarian he was a strong advocate for libraries encompassing public lectures, proud that 'he might also claim some experience as a library lecturer.'[466]

This is a typical report from March 1884:

> 'The last of series of six weekly lectures, promoted by the Salford Museum and Parks Committee for the purpose of showing the use and value of the books in the library, objects in the museum, and paintings in the galleries, as aids to the study of literature, science, and art, was

> delivered on Wednesday evening in the reading-room of the Peel Park Museum by Mr. W. E. A. Axon. The subject of the lecture—the founder of Buddhism, in illustration of the great Burmese figure the museum —was one which attracted a large number of persons, and the lecturer's remarks were listened to with great interest.'[467]

Earlier in the same month he had spoken to over 1200 people at the Manchester Art Gallery on a subject he knew very well, *Art in Lancashire*. WEAA spiced up this look at art institutions with challenges to municipal officials and quick sketches, 'The Royal Institution in Manchester owed its inception to Thos. Dodd, who was in succession tailor-boy, band-boy butcher, harper, tailor again, footman, bookseller and auctioneer, and in addition to this made himself one of the finest judges of engravings who ever lived. He never quite understood his native language, but his ponderous Latinised phraseology concealed a knowledge of art history such as few have possessed. The Royal Institution founded 1823, had now, happy transformation, become the City Art Gallery of Manchester.'[468]

In his usual way, WEAA then turned both talks into papers.

Taking 1888 as an example, as well as the usual presentations to his own societies, WEAA was asked to give talks at a church in Fallowfield, the Manchester Free Libraries, the Mission Lads' Cricket Club, Charter Street Ragged School, Salford Town Hall, the Warrington Museum, the Radcliffe Literary and Scientific Society, the Mutual Improvement Society, and the Manchester Crematorium Society. This last society seems to have made WEAA an honorary member on the assumption, perhaps based on his article *Wells and Burial Grounds*,[469] he would want to be. WEAA gave a neutral overview of cremation literature. Certainly, many vegetarians supported cremation societies.

These invitations came in a period when WEAA was too ill to get to the *Guardian* office and his daughter, most likely Kitty after Sophie's marriage in 1886, delivered his articles. He convalesced in St Leonards and then Southport, but it took time to regain his strength. It is remarkable that he still fulfilled many engagements. Whilst being concerned at his health, organisers were still eager to book

him. Benjamin Armitage, later an MP, pressed him, 'I know you have been invalided lately but it will not be necessary to speak at great length or stay long.'[470]

WEAA was even considered an acceptable substitute for the great Edwin Waugh. James Hodgson, on behalf of the National Home Reading Union, approached him in June 1889 to cover for Waugh at their Summer School, 'Mr Waugh is to be out of the country next month taking a sea voyage; so may I ask if you will, in accordance with conditional promise, kindly oblige us by undertaking to give the two lectures at Blackpool on 'Lancashire Folklore.'[471] WEAA agreed but had to withdraw at the last minute as Jane's condition worsened.

The *VM* regularly provided full texts of the many talks he gave over the years, and he was especially loved at the Summer Schools for the charm of his deep, rich voice. The *Alliance News* provided some summary reports of his temperance talks and occasionally gave long extracts or even the full text. Examples of the summary reports are *A Good Time Coming: an address at the Sackville Street Temperance Hall*,

[472] and *The Spread of Temperance Literature: an Address to the Manchester and Salford Temperance Union.*[473] An example of full text is WEAA's extremely powerful and political *The Claims of Duty in Relation to Temperance and the Liquor Traffic, given at the Free Christian Church Pendleton 11th August 1899.*[474] His hatred of the trade that murders children, and brings early death to its workers is palpable: very like his burning anger at cruelty to animals that turned him to a vegetarian. The emotions are tempered with hard facts, analysis, and statistics. He also calls on the powerful name of one of his heroes:

> 'Richard Cobden said long ago: "The moral force of the masses lies in the Temperance movement, and I confess I have no faith in anything apart from that movement for the elevation of the working-classes. We do not sufficiently estimate the amount of crime, vice, poverty, ignorance, and destitution, which springs from the drinking habits of the people." Amongst Cobden's friends and contemporaries there were Colonel Thompson, like Cobden himself, a teetotaller; George Thompson, a teetotaller; Henry Vincent, a teetotaller; Joseph Sturge, a teetotaller; Joseph Brotherton, a teetotaller; Samuel Morley, a teetotaller; Joseph Livesey, a teetotaller; and John Bright, a teetotaller. What work these men have done for humanity! And the truth of Cobden's evidence is every day confirmed.'

WEAA often received invitations to give talks: he was an admired speaker. Sometimes he stepped in for ministers who had to miss

giving their Sunday sermons. This was seen as an opportunity by some reformers. Ned Scott, an advocate for cremation, wrote, 'As a lay preacher you can do good work on getting them [parsons] on track.'[475] WEAA appeared at Baptist and Unitarian churches, the Bible Christian Church and was known as a lay preacher. He substituted for the Rev. William Gaskell on one occasion, and he gave a sermon *Cain's Question* to the Bible Christian Church on 8 September 1907. As previously mentioned, WEAA once likened the dialect poet Samuel Laycock to a lay preacher and was perhaps influenced in his own his sermons by his example. Few texts, extracts or details survive, but three sermons at least were printed as pamphlets.

In 1886 Francis William Newman, President of the VS, ordered fifty copies of WEAA's sermon *The Holy Mountain.* Mr Green fortunately preserved the rare pamphlet, recording the text of the sermon as read at the Unitarian Church in Pendleton on 20 March 1886. WEAA's powerful voice, his angry denunciation of the needless misery caused to children, still has the power to make the reader or hearer shiver. It is full of forceful

imagery and phrases: WEAA expresses the agony of grief with passionate feeling. There is a sudden and shocking switch from the visions of the prophet Isiah to the average life of the Sheffield grinder, deprived of his years by the modern machinery of wealth:

> ‘What are the chances of a long and useful life for a child born beneath the leaden skies of Sheffield or of Manchester, with its body starved of solid fare, and its soul blighted by the foul language, the obscene jests, the blatant brutality of the slums? We have poisoned the streams and polluted the air, and every breeze that blows brings its cloud of disease and death. Here we have so arranged our methods that the people are slain by the machinery for the creation of wealth.’[476]

It is fortunate that one of WEAA’s lay sermons so impressed his listeners that Charles Rowley asked WEAA to have it printed. This was the address WEAA gave on 28 December 1890 to the Ancoats Brotherhood. Entitled *Christmas Merry and Sad*,[477] it starts in a gentle and persuasive style, with WEAA treating Christ as a teacher, very much a Unitarian approach.

WEAA takes the one commandment of 'Love One Another' as containing 'the whole hope of the world.' After dealing with the abuses of established Christianity, and how Emperor Julian was lost to Christianity by the crimes and slaughter committed by its followers, WEAA then turns to the present. He hit hard with the facts and figures of the 'horrors of darkest Manchester', demanding 'Shall we rejoice that men and women in this city of wealth and enterprise are worse housed than my lord's racers or the squire's beagles?' Strikingly he imagines Christ arrested for street-preaching and surely being bailed by Rowley. WEAA can only hope he too would turn up to bail Christ. There is much denouncing of drunkenness. It is hard to imagine anyone falling asleep in WEAA's vivid preaching. WEAA left his audience with a sweetener: a recitation of his poems *The Ancoats Skylark* and *The Counsel of Perfection*, inspired by a passage written by his vegetarian colleague, Dr Anna Kingsford.

WEAA blurred the line between sermons and lectures: he could do Biblical themes with the best of them whilst speedily turning the talk into denouncements that veered on the

political. This was especially the case with temperance: *England Free and Sober* was delivered as an Ancoats Sunday lecture on 29 November 1899, highly admired and printed as a pamphlet.[478] WEAA moved easily between the poet Cowper, John Wesley, and the Hebrew prophet Habakkuk as well as analysing Board of Trade figures, the state of current legislation and a vivid account of the abuse suffered by women and children. He persuasively counters the late Archbishop Magee's epigram that he would rather have England free than sober. WEAA is certain, 'A sober England would be a merry England: there would be fewer black eyes but more bright eyes.'

Appearance

WEAA aged 37

WEAA had not yet evolved into the form of an

elderly scholar: this came later in his fifties. But he did grow his beard. Beards had not been popular in the first half of the nineteenth century through association with radicals and revolutionaries. Heavy beards, sported to combat the rigours of the Crimea, triggered a change. WEAA grew the immense beard that became almost obligatory for Victorian gentlemen from the mid nineteenth century onwards. Denoting manliness, beards were often a disguise for the bad teeth that plagued the Victorians. Kathyrn Hughes recently exposed the secrets of those less than glamorous beards of Tennyson, Darwin, and others.[479]

WEAA's children were impressed by its magnificence. The bearded WEAA may have looked like a Victorian patriarch, but he certainly did not behave like one with his daughter Sophie or any others of the family. Joe Haddow recalled, 'Sophie seemed to order even the change of his collar, and when he came down in one that should have been discarded half seriously but wholly humorously he was ordered back, and with a contented smile dislodging his great black beard, away he would go like an obedient

child to do as he was told.'[480] AFB recorded that the beard began to turn grey in 1883.F E Hamer, a Guardian colleague, recalled him as 'a curious little figure, always draped in black, with bespectacled eyes, a great beard and bushy hair. But beneath this solemn exterior there was a delicate sense of humour, and a feeling of goodwill I never saw ruffled.'[481]

CHAPTER 14

MR. AXON OF THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN

Post with the *Guardian*

If the hilltop image is pursued, WEAA had a steep climb to get there. There was the loss of his Antilles post in 1874 and then the West Indian in 1877 as well as the demise of *LNQ*.

It is usually said that WEAA was a permanent member of the *Guardian* staff from 1874 onwards. AFB records this as the date, and WEAA's length of service is given here and elsewhere as thirty years, which as he retired in 1905 fits with this 1874/1875 date. However, *LNQ* was a temporary contract and ended in 1877.

Another possibility is that WEAA continued to contribute to the *Guardian* on an ad hoc basis until around 1880, which is when his name appears on the ledgers as a permanent member of staff, office librarian as well as journalist. Advancement came some years later when he was appointed onto the Editorial Team.

Whatever the exact circumstances, WEAA was from 1874 onwards inextricably associated with the *Guardian*. William Harrison Ainsworth, for example, as early as 1878, chose 'Mr. Axon of the Manchester Guardian' to review his latest novel.[482] Coming from an author who for a time almost rivalled Dickens in popularity this was an immense token of WEAA's worth.

Office Librarian

In 1879 WEAA had been, according to W. Stanley Jevons, 'the only person not actually holding a public appointment as librarian who was elected a member of the Council of the Library Association.'[483]

WEAA was immersed in far wider library affairs than those that occupied him as the *Guardian* office librarian. In 1881, he was on Manchester committees in respect of the Free Libraries Bill to represent views to Parliament. As well as being a member of the Salford Museum, Libraries and Parks Committee, he variously assisted Ashton, Wigan, and Macclesfield Free Libraries, with cataloguing, classification, and selection. He liaised with American librarians like Dewey and Poole. He was the first in the UK to classify his own

private collection with Dewey Decimal Classification. Additionally, he organised the filing for the MSS as well as being responsible for the MLC library. In 1875, the Unitarian Home Missionary College commissioned him to catalogue their library, 'The work was entrusted to the capable hands of Mr. (afterwards Dr.) W.E.A. Axon, that well-known antiquarian and man of letters.'[484] This was a valuable library containing many rare items originating from the eighteenth-century Warrington Academy. There were two collections bequeathed by readers WEAA had known at Campfield. These were from Dr Beard, one of the first to attempt a reference catalogue for Campfield, and from the demanding but humorous reader, Rev. Henry Green.

In the field of librarianship, WEAA was author, conference speaker, bright spark of the LA, freelance cataloguer, and campaigner on several fronts, altogether an eminent expert. He never seems to have referred to his position as an office librarian at the *Guardian*.

Editorial Team

William Canning and WEAA had been unfaltering friends since 1874, first meeting at

the UK Alliance office. Both were members of VS: Canning was Hon. Sec of the Manchester, Salford, and District Temperance Union when WEAA was President. They were also *Guardian* colleagues. Canning recorded the occasion, though unfortunately not the date, that resulted in WEAA's promotion into the Editorial Department,

> 'However much his modesty might hide his wide knowledge from the casual acquaintance, twenty languages were at his command, and when the hour of need came he was not found wanting. Soon after he went to the Manchester Guardian and before he was placed on the editorial staff some emergency caused the editor-in-chief to ask him if he could write an article on a subject which he indicated. He said, "Yes ; I know something about the subject," and when the article was promptly written and taken to the editorial room he was asked if he thought he could do another. The second was also undertaken and duly delivered, but when he had again settled in his own room the door opened and Mr. Scott put in his head with the remark, "It is really too bad, but

> do you think you could do me a third one?' and so he wrote three articles for one issue by way of beginning to his duties which he later undertook.'[485]

Another colleague, F E Hamer, was sympathetic to WEAA, perceiving him as predominantly a scholar and rather daunted by the rapid changes in the newspaper industry. Hamer's recollection of WEAA as a journalist is the fullest account I have traced. Significantly Hamer focused on WEAA as a man who was between two periods of development, and he was definite about the length of service,

> 'As a journalist, William Axon supplied a link with a period and with conditions of newspaper production which are now past, never to be revived. He joined the editorial staff of the Guardian in 1874, when it consisted of the usual eight pages, and when one might read a three column verbatim without a "break" and under a single headline. Among his colleagues was "Dick" Whiteing, who was, so Axon recently told me, a "general utility" man on the literary side, and when Whiteing left for Paris Axon took over most of his duties. He was associated more immediately with the reviewing department, and he never looked more completely in his element than when

> snowed under with books. In the thirty-one years he spent on the *Guardian*, Axon witnessed a revolution in newspaper methods, and like most of the older men, he must have found some difficulty in accommodating himself to the rapid changes.'[486]

William Thomas Arnold was one of C P Scott's golden boys with impeccable connections to great literary and political families. Tasmanian born, Rugby and Oxford educated, he and his wife took to the Manchester cultural scene with enthusiasm. He was chief leader writer for nearly twenty years, forced to retire through ill health. Shortly after this he wrote to WEAA, thanking him for his *Lando* and asking for a copy of *Tullia*. He added his appreciation of WEAA as a colleague, 'I have always regarded your work as a very important constituent of that exact and scholarly tone which distinguishes the M.G. among newspapers.'[487] This was praise indeed from an outstanding journalist. Another striking aspect of the letter is that Arnold passed his mantle to WEAA for fauna and flora features, 'keep a special eye to animal subjects now that I am no longer there

to look after them.' Arnold's ornithological articles are still highly regarded.

WEAA and C P Scott

There are several books on C P Scott and the *Guardian,* but they do not mention WEAA or other minor Manchester colleagues such as John Evans. These histories focus on the more glamorous journalists, mainly recruited from C P Scott's beloved Oxford. Yet there are several letters in AP between C P Scott and WEAA and whilst these mainly concern *Guardian* business, there is enough to indicate friendship between the two men. WEAA dedicated his book *Bygone Sussex* to C P Scott 'in grateful remembrance of the kindness of many years.' [488] The association continued even after WEAA left the *Guardian* in 1905. Both men commiserated emotionally with each other on losses of loved ones.

'A Sworn Knight of the Pen'

On a professional level, WEAA was an excellent writer, bringing clarity, precision and yet lightness to complex topics. He could alter his style as required, turning his hand to gentle sentiment for family temperance journals, scholarly essays for fellow antiquarians, sharp statistics and analysis for societies, observant descriptions of people and places for journalism, and entertaining narratives to lighten historic detail.

As one admirer rather extravagantly expressed it:

'And what is surprising is that nothing

> seems to come amiss to him. The most gigantic pyramid of figures – the most abstruse statistical problem, never proves too much for his literary digestion, and at the same time he is ready to soar on the wing of the lightest fancy, and even a ballad to his mistress' eyebrow would not be beyond or beneath his powers. In short, he is steeped to the lips in literature, and a sworn knight of the pen – sworn till death….'[489]

A reviewer of WEAA's *Echoes of Old Lancashire* singled out his easy style and his ability to encompass information in a limited space, 'His stories appear to be inexhaustible, and, unlike many other antiquarian and topographical writers, he has the literary skill to present his material in a readable and attractive manner….A great deal of information will be found compressed into a short paper on "The Folk-Lore of Lancashire."'[490]

His role as a memorialist was now well established. Morgan Brierley, the Saddleworth journalist, joked that, 'You are very good to send me your two Biographies of two valuable friends of us both – A thousand thanks-You

have only been too brief and too cool in your eulogies- I shall expect you to be a "little warmer" when you come to write my Obituary!'[491] Brierley died some nine years later and surely it was WEAA who wrote his 'warm' obituary in the *Guardian*, affectionately describing how Brierley had worked from the age of six, managed to educate himself and became a teacher, mathematician, traveller, *Manchester City News* journalist, writer of 'racy articles,' and a fellow member of the MLC. 'His character was exceedingly amiable, genial and attractive, and it was his earnest wish to do good and to leave the world a little better than he found it.'[492] He and WEAA had much in common.

Manchester Guardian Archive

Many names familiar from WEAA's literary, reform or antiquarian circles, appear in the *Guardian* account books as contributors. Amongst them are WEAA's regular correspondents, Alley, Casartelli, Credland, Boyd Dawkins, F J Faraday, E Kirk, Prince Kropotkin, John Plant, Harry Rawson, C Rowley, and C W Sutton. There are several women, too, listed as contributors, and at least some of these would have been known to

WEAA.

WEAA was directly responsible for his son Ernest, his son-in-law Joe Haddow, his African American friend William Sanders Scarborough, and several others contributing to the *Guardian*. Ernest was an energetic writer, producing much over the years, usually on the same lines as his father's interests. Joe wrote *Agricultural and Farm Notes* in 1890, prior to emigrating to New Zealand. WEAA may have managed to establish his fifteen year old daughter Kitty as a *Guardian* journalist.

WEAA was always generous in helping fellow writers. Arthur Croxton remembered him with gratitude. Croxton first met him amongst the marble-topped tables of a tea-room in Oldham Street, the venue for the Shorthand Association, 'Here, too came men of distinction, who generously gave of their best in speech and lectures. One was William E. A. Axon, a brilliant leader-writer on the Manchester Guardian, a poet and an enthusiastic social reformer…. It was due to the kind heart of William E. A. Axon that journalism opened the door of a new world to me.'[493] Even after he had moved to a

successful career as a theatrical manager in London Croxton never forgot how WEAA took the trouble to introduce him to the chief reporter, William Cash.

There are no details in GA of WEAA's salary. When he retired in 1905, he was awarded a pension for five years of £150 per annum, so his salary must have been above that level.

There are records in GA of payments for WEAA's contributions which were presumably paid over and above his salary. Payments vary according to length but altogether add to a substantial amount. The rate in this period seems to have been generally ten shillings and sixpence for a third of a column, a guinea for a half column and two guineas for a whole column. Croxton referred to this as 'penny-a-lining.'

WEAA's Contributions

The *Guardian* clerks listed payments, dates, and categories for each contributor in the account books, but the level of detail varied considerably. In WEAA's period of employment, date, type, length, and payment were usually given under each individual name in the *Guardian* account books. Titles were included for leaders, but this was dropped in 1882. Titles continued to be cited against reviews, headed articles, Special and Local reports and Domestic and General reports. Titles were in abbreviated forms and cannot always be traced. Codes were brought in to represent categories. The meticulous detail of recording is impressive, but the lists

vary in legibility and there are gaps.

WEAA was listed from 1880 to 1886 for reviews, leaders, headed articles and the Arts, Dramatic and Science column. This hodgepodge column of cultural and academic news had been running for years, so presumably WEAA was engaged to assist on occasion. In 1888 to 1890, he was in the Editorial Department and fewer contributions are listed for him. After 1890 he became involved in the *Books and Bookman* column.

James Bowker commiserated with WEAA over his regular contributions to the *Guardian* being unnamed when the 'common herd' who wrote in saw their names in print.[494] Towards the end of the nineteenth century *Guardian* journalists started having their names attributed to articles.

The AP correspondence is another source for identifying WEAA's *Guardian* pieces. There are letters from correspondents seeking reviews for their works, praising WEAA's articles or sending in comments. For example, Ford Madox Brown informed WEAA that his obituary of Rossetti had greatly pleased the family. C P Scott, not a man prone to give

praise, was also struck by WEAA's obituary on Rossetti and took care to tell him so, 'I congratulate you on yr. notice of Rossetti which is excellently done.'[495] With these clues, the obituary can then be identified in the Domestic and General Ledger as *The Late D G Rossetti*, 2 April 1880. It was one column fifteen lines in length and gained WEAA the standard payment of two guineas. A letter from William Horsfall enabled the identification of another of his outstanding notices. Horsfall wrote, 'I have read your notice of Darwin in the Guardian. It is incomparably the best I have seen.'[496] This was *The Late Charles Darwin* published on 21 April 1882; C P Scott and the Darwin family likewise were struck with admiration.
The eminent surgeon Charles James Cullingworth, appointed as chair of obstetrics at Owens, sought WEAA's help for his opening lecture. When the lecture on insanity was printed in *The Lancet* Cullingworth gratefully sent WEAA a copy. A few days later, WEAA covered the paper in a *Guardian* leader: Cullingworth wrote, 'I at once recognised your friendly hand.' The association is not unexpected as medical men and literary men

mingled at Manchester societies. As well as writing several papers relevant to medical and health interests, WEAA was on at least two hospital boards. These letters from Cullingworth illuminate a lesser-known aspect of WEAA's life as well as identifying a significant *Guardian* leader.

Friends prided themselves on spotting WEAA's hand in the *Guardian*. Alfred E Eccles, a wealthy retired cotton manufacturer was one of the 'Seven Men of Preston' who founded the teetotal movement in 1840. He was Grand Treasurer of IOGT. Eccles thought highly of WEAA and often invited him to his home Albion Villa in Chorley. He wrote, 'I always seem to detect your writing in Manchester Guardian. I take yearly about 1700 Liberal newspapers & give them out to my own people here & so make the whole Zone a Liberal one.'[497] The reference to the newspapers relates to the Book and Tract Room that Eccles freely provided. WEAA's networks pulled in fascinating characters.

It was useful to have a *Guardian* journalist as a friend. The AP correspondence has many examples of requests for favours. WEAA was

asked to review books, push for letters to be published, and to support campaigns. Trübner continued to be useful. He made demands on WEAA but amply repaid him with support, advice, or opportunities to get into print. In a letter of 1 May 1876, for example, he wanted WEAA to support him with a *Guardian* article in some dispute over a publication by Lord Amberley.[498]

Other duties

Walmsley described how WEAA kept daily diaries of his *Guardian* work with brief notes on one page and pasted cuttings from his columns on the opposite page. Walmsley had access to one diary for 1884 and quoted an example of a typical day, Monday 25 February, '10 Foreign Papers. 12-30 Lunch-called to see Rowley; 1-0 marking copy; 2-45 Sending orders for Mr. Scott, looking-up dates as to reviews &c. Making abstract of Rowley's paper; 4-30 Index. Left at 5-20. Called again at 10-0 with report of Literary Club.'[499]

Walmsley added a note that WEAA extracted material for Foreign Papers every day, picking out reportable happenings. Unfortunately, the 1884 diary that Walmsley handled does not seem to be in either the AP or in the GA.

C P Scott's letters to WEAA were

characteristically terse without stylistic frills. They represent only a handful of the office notes WEAA must have received from him. He trusted WEAA's recommendations, thanking him for suggesting a W R P Philips as a correspondent for the Congo.[500] There were calls for WEAA to track down obscure items or information, sometimes for the *Guardian* and sometimes for C P Scott's political career. In 1886, C P Scott sent WEAA this note, 'A great deal of capital is made by the Tories out of the Flag, and some of them say that if Home Rule is carried the harp will have to be taken out of it. I would be much obliged if you could give me a history of the Flag..both the Union Jack and the Royal Standard.'[501]

1886 was a significant year for the *Guardian*. C P Scott had already focused on housing and medical conditions for the poor, issues that would have drawn him close to WEAA. He now committed himself to Irish Home Rule, supporting Gladstone in the split of the Liberal Party. The *Guardian* henceforth reflected C P Scott's new Liberalism in its unpopular opposition to British imperialism in South Africa and the Boer Wars, its denouncement of the expansion of armaments, and its support of

women's suffrage as well as social reforms. WEAA could not have been in a better place.

Ernest wrote of WEAA's relationship with George Saintsbury, 'a high tory' who nevertheless became a *Guardian* reviewer and formed an unlikely friendship with the radical WEAA, 'the two men appreciating each other's merits and fairness.' WEAA was a Saturday reviewer when Saintsbury was the literary editor and Ernest wrote a few articles himself, 'though I fancy they were credited to my father, who probably revised them drastically. I was young!'[502] WEAA and Saintsbury corresponded for twenty years.

The Willing Horse Gets Knocked Up

C P Scott demanded long hours from his staff and from himself. Yet WEAA still found time to take on commissions from publishers for substantial books, to continue his high level of contributions to *N&Q*, journals, other newspapers, and society publications. His 'hilltop' period was incredibly productive, and he was stimulated rather than burdened by his *Guardian* role though the office library may well have been rather neglected.

WEAA found writing leaders and local news rewarding activities, especially when they provided a vehicle for campaigning. WEAA is remembered still for his vegetarian and temperance missions but his

involvement with black rights was equally passionate and motivated by his humanism.

C P Scott and WEAA shared the same fascination with a broad range of subjects. Some of the journalists were fazed by demands to produce short leaders from uncharted fields. Not WEAA, however, and it is a tribute to his writing that so many were printed. C P Scott was so keen to encourage the shorts that, 'The superfluous perished, like infants exposed, without recognition outside the family.'[503]

Friends raised concerns that WEAA was endangering his frail health through overwork, and he certainly had episodes of illness in this period. Yet WEAA's correspondents regularly asked him for help, favours, or advice in the same breath as expressing concern with his health.

John Evans at the *Guardian* kept WEAA up to date when he was absent from work; incidentally providing peeps of *Guardian* office life. When WEAA suffered from bronchitis early in 1881, John Evans wrote of C P Scott's kindness and concern, 'He expressed the hope, too, that you would take plenty of nourishing food.'[504] In another very chatty letter, full of theatrical titbits, John Evans mentioned he has sent a note to Mr Scott, 'but like many other stray things it seems to have undergone the "Boycotting" process.'[505] As mentioned

earlier, many pieces ended up in C P Scott's wastepaper bin. In another colourful letter Evans remarked, 'I guess you have not dared the devil and all his angelic host hovering about today. The weather has been frightful and I have been chilled ever since I got up.'[506]

In 1887, WEAA suffered an attack of rheumatic fever. His vegetarian comrade William Harrison suggested he came to his house near Plymouth Grove for a vapour bath[507] and the antiquarian John Bailey, himself recuperating in Eastbourne, tried to persuade WEAA to return there.[508] Godbold, his photographer friend in St Leonards reminded him, in his letter of 27 June 1887, that the 'willing horse gets knocked up.'[509] In both periods, C P Scott made flexible work arrangements for WEAA as relayed by his colleague John Evans. WEAA was under orders to rest, get well 'or you may have a serious relapse.'[510] WEAA was indeed ill again in early 1888 and his daughter Kitty visited the *Guardian* office on his behalf. C P Scott, away at St Andrews, requested frequent updates, 'anxious for your recovery and welfare.'[511]

Other *Guardian* Glimpses
WEAA appeared occasionally in the *Guardian* as a private correspondent under his initials or fuller name.

Between 1874 and 1890, WEAA had at least five letters published. His topics were *The Chetham Library*, 11 October 1875, *The Oppressed Christians in the East*, 7 April 1876, *The Shakespeare Bible*, 4 July 1884, *The Comfortable Classes in Manchester*, 9 September 1887, and *The Drink Bill of a Manufacturing County*, 28 January 1888. His dialect poem, *Owd Dan's Fiddle*, was published as a feature on 15 July 1890, an unusual item for the *Guardian* and the accounts show WEAA was not paid for this.

Guardian colleagues frequently mentioned his name in their reports of local events and meetings. WEAA was present at a record number of meetings, often in an active role. He really was a meetings junkie. His request early in 1881 for more meetings of the English Dialect Society received a very irritated reply from the secretary J H Nodal, 'I see no use whatever for meetings. What is more, I cannot spare time for useless meetings. There is quite

enough to do without having the trouble of calling & attending meetings which are purposeless & from wh. nothing comes.'[512] Nodal knew WEAA well through the English Dialect Society and MLC. He was editor of the *Manchester City News* and WEAA one of his regular contributors. He felt no need for politeness in his reproaches.

James Leatham

However successful, WEAA would readily assist his struggling fellow travellers. The young James Leatham chased up what had happened to his book *Socialism and Character*, left for review at the Guardian Office. He contacted WEAA whom he knew only from his articles and poems, explaining, 'I am sure you will not grudge a kindness to an obscure citizen of the Republic of Letters.' He was a printer by trade and in his letter made the powerful point that errors were 'produced in a small office where poverty compels them to do things in a makeshift fashion sometimes.'[513] This casts a new light on a topic that was often the object of scholarly humour.

Not only did WEAA take the trouble to respond but he immediately invited Leatham to his house. Afterwards Leatham wrote an

emotional letter to thank WEAA for his hospitality, apologising for being awkward and embarrassed. His hardships had robbed him of 'reasonable ease of manner.'[514] Leatham explained how he had been dismissed for union activity by John Heywood and confided his despair of ever finding work when the trade was in such a poor way. These two letters are poignant documents of social history. This episode must have been key in James Leatham's recovery; he is now remembered as a fiery socialist pioneer, publisher, propagandist, and author, commemorated in his home city Aberdeen where he established a printing shop in 1889. WEAA had various dealings with Aberdeen University Press and St. Andrews University, took a historical interest in Aberdeen printers like Edward Raban, and perhaps sought out Leatham on his visits.

There is no more from Leatham in AP, but the episode is yet another example of WEAA's practical compassion to perfect strangers.

Snapshot of *Guardian* contributions: 1881

WEAA might have been particularly busy as a leader writer but otherwise the level of his contributions for reviews, headed articles and reports matches those of other staff and contributors.

1881 can serve as an example of a typical year

in WEAA's 1880 to 1885 period. The numbers recorded in the ledger book reflect the busy routine of WEAA's *Guardian* life. After 1881 the ledger books are less rewarding as specific topics were no longer listed. The details of the ledger entries vary but the overall picture is clear. Totals are usually just given for the month, and I have added these together for the 1881.

Under Special and Local, WEAA is listed for six articles whose length varies from a few lines to a one and a quarter column. The topics are *Congregationalism*, *Teaching of Deaf & Dumb*, *East Lancs*, *Earl of Beaconsfield*, *The Late Mr E Maill,* and *Congregationalism in Farnworth*. WEAA earned eight pounds, ten shillings and sixpence.

Under Reviews, WEAA is listed for eight reviews, again of varying length. These covered *Statistics*, *English Flower Gardens*, *Dictionary of Biography*, *Old Country*, *Derwent*, *Lit-pamo*, *ManuaI of Insects* and the *Book of British Topography*. WEAA earned three pounds four shillings and sixpence.

Under Leaders, WEAA is listed for forty-nine articles, generally described as short leaders,

earning the standard ten shillings sixpence each, and varying from a half to a third column. Topics were given in the ledgers up to the end of June but after that just listed only as short leaders. WEAA's leaders from January to June included *Invasion*, *Chetham Society*, *Free Library Bill*, *Death of Mr Collinson*, *Prince Rupert*, *The People*, *Literary Piracy*, *Dickens*, *Roof Masonry*, *Birds*, *Colour Line in US*, *Mr Justice Blackwell*, *Geo Stephenson*, *Negro, DD*, and *Disraeli's Curiosities in Literature*. WEAA earned twenty-five pounds, fourteen shillings and sixpence.

Under Art Dramatic & Science, WEAA is listed for one article in October and three in November. These are all quarter columns. Titles are only given in two instances; *History of British Agents* and *Roumanian Fairy Tales* WEAA earned fifteen shillings and three pence.
Under Domestic (General), WEAA is listed for thirty-three articles, the shortest is nineteen lines and the longest two columns. Generally, they are one column or just under. Topics, not all decipherable, cover *French Critic on Manchester*, *Earl of Beau..*, *Lupe E.Maill*, *Mr Henry Pearse*, *Bennett St*, *The Peerage*, *Mr Chas*

Dillon, *The Late Mr J Schlileiden*, *The Census*, *Dean Sf*, *Late Mr Rothwell*, *Population of Manchester*, *Economic Science Brit. Assn*, *British Association*, *R W Procter*, *Library Association*, *Robert Harrison*, *Royal Institution*, *New Oddfellows*, *Late Mr Greg*, *Estates of Chadwick*, and *Flora of.*. WEAA earned thirty-seven pounds eight shillings and three pence.

To give another perspective, his total output for the year is a hundred articles on top of his post as office librarian and other duties. For someone as professional and focused as WEAA, this was not too demanding and in line with the average for *Guardian* staff. Altogether, he earned an additional seventy-five pounds and thirteen shillings.

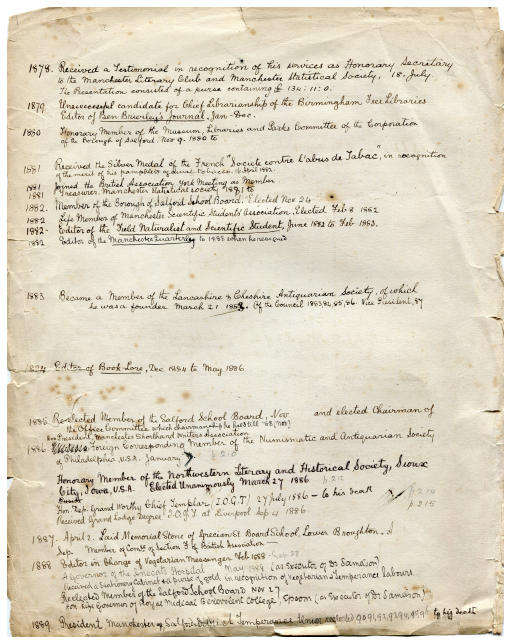
The snapshot of 1881 also illustrates, as might be expected, the huge range of WEAA's knowledge and his ability to produce readable copy on any subject. He was frequently called upon for his special talent for vivid obituaries, centring on motivations, achievements and packing in real information, rather than on solemn respect.

An example from 11 April 1881, is his obituary of James Collinson. In the very first sentence WEAA nails him as 'a man whose undoubted ability sought expression in diverse, if not discordant, forms of pictorial art.' He sets Collinson in the context of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and the liveliness of the piece somehow conveys that the person is still there, their ideas and activities still out in the world.

Guardian reports of WEAA's activities

WEAA, the reporter, was also a public figure, subject of regular scrutiny. Searching the *Guardian* highlights the scale and range of WEAA's activities, as well as the regard in which he was held. As an example, these are amongst the mentions for November 1881. WEAA read his paper on the *Sources of Comus* at *MLC,* presided over the meeting of the Women's Protective and Provident League at the Mechanic's Institution, attended MSS meeting on social conditions and housing, was nominated as honorary member of a Salford Corporation Committee for the management of libraries, museums, and parks, attended MLC meeting at the Palatine Hotel where the principal paper was by WEAA's friend, H T Crofton, an expert on gypsy folklore. WEAA contributed to the debate by pointing out analogues with the *Tale of the Master Thief*. The different spheres continually overlap, and it is almost exhausting to contemplate how WEAA juggled all this as well as his endless writing, deadlines, and family demands. His name was ever present in the buzz of the city's life. The *Guardian* reports provide snapshots of not just WEAA but also of his networks of friends. Familiar names recur in different

contexts. It is likely that WEAA both participated in and reported on some of these events. The *Guardian* only reflects a selection of the events in which WEAA participated throughout 1881. *Guardian* reports covered annual or key meetings rather than the ordinary or less formal occasions. The timeline sketches in AFB vividly recall WEAA's busy life.


1878. Received a Testimonial in recognition of his services as Honorary Secretary to the Manchester Literary Club and Manchester Statistical Society. 18 July. The Presentation consisted of a purse containing £ 134 : 11 : 0.

1879 Unsuccessful candidate for Chief Librarianship of the Birmingham Free Libraries

Editor of Leon Brierley's Journal Jan-Dec.

1880 Honorary Member of the Museum, Libraries and Parks Committee of the Corporation of the Borough of Salford Nov 9. 1880

1881 Received the Silver Medal of the French Societe contre l'abus de Tabac, in recognition of the merit of his pamphlet on Nicotine. 10 April 1881.

1881 Joined the United Association, York Meeting as Member

1881 Treasurer Manchester Naturalist Society. Feb 16

1882. Member of the Borough of Salford School Board. Elected Nov 24

1882 Life Member of Manchester Scientific Students' Association. Elected Feb 6 1882

1882- Editor of the Field Naturalist and Scientific Student. June 1882 to Feb 1883.

1882 Editor of the Manchester Evening News to 1888 when he resigned

1883 Became a Member of the Lancashire & Cheshire Antiquarian Society, of which he was a founder. March 21 1883. Of its Council 1883-84, 85, 86. Vice President 87

1884 Editor of Book Lore, Dec 1884 to May 1886

1886 Re-elected Member of the Salford School Board, Nov and elected Chairman of the Offices Committee which Chairmanship he held till '88 (?89)

Vice President, Manchester Shorthand Writers Association

1886 Elected Foreign Corresponding Member of the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia U.S.A. January

Honorary Member of the Northwestern Literary and Historical Society, Sioux City, Iowa, U.S.A. Elected Unanimously March 27 1886

Death Jim Park Grand Worthy Chief Templar, I.O.G.T. 27 July 1886 – to his death

Received Grand Lodge Regret I.O.O.F. at Liverpool Sep 4 1886

1887. April 2. Laid Memorial Stone of Specimen Bd School, Lower Broughton. J.

Sep. Member of Comte of Section 3 of Public Education

1888 Editor in charge of Vegetarian Messenger Feb 1888

A Governor of the Seventh Hospital May 1888 (on Executive of Dr Samaritan)

Received a Testimonial Address and purse of gold in recognition of vegetarian & temperance labours

Re-elected Member of the Salford School Board Nov 27

Elected Governor of the Medical Benevolent College Epsom (as Executor of Dr Samaritan)

1889 President Manchester & Salford Band of Hope Union (re temperance & vegetarian work) 1889, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95

Looking back

The comradery of the *Guardian* made it rather special amongst the communities of print. In 1912, WEAA's old colleague Richard Whiteing reminisced about working life at the *Guardian*

in the original building, ‘I remember perfectly well our occupancy of the two adjoining rooms in the old tumble down building in Cross Street, myself in the outer one you in the inner one busy with your interesting work. What a great deal has happened since then to both of us to say nothing of the old building itself. I rejoice to think that so much that is pleasant to have in life has happened to you.’[515]

CHAPTER 15

BOOKS AND BOOK LORE

Earning a living from Literature

How far were WEAA's literary efforts profitable? The question remains open. Walmsley believed, 'There is not much evidence that Axon made much money by writing.'[516] Publishers, editors, and booksellers fill AP with gloomy news of low sales. Abel Heywood Jnr., wrote to WEAA to confirm *Nixon* was out of print, adding the complaint that 'I am sick of slow books, and am getting so old as to fear I shall never live to see the end of many of those we have.'[517]

WEAA generally did not charge for his many contributions to reform journals, 'His gifts of expression were at the disposal of all the journals of the causes he espoused, and some of them, as, for instance, the "Alliance News," were under an infinite obligation for services always rendered without stint and without pay.'[518] Rarely did WEAA take fees for his vegetarian or temperance papers and even then he accepted a lower rate. The Ideal

Publishing Union did pay him three guineas for an article on John Bright in the *United Temperance Gazette* but were embarrassed to offer less for the translations they very much wanted for the *Vegetarian*. The editor apologised for the offer of 'the humble rate of 10/- a thousand words,' adding 'Later I hope to be able to offer you a juster fee.' WEAA added a scrawled note to the letter, 'Terms: yes, but waive right of refundment.'[519] These translations from Tolstoy were likely to be via the hand of WEAA's associate, Alymer Maude.

Dr John Kellogg, brother of William Kellogg of cornflakes fame, paid WEAA for his articles and WEAA did not waive these fees as Dr Kellogg ran a business enterprise at his Battle Creek Sanitorium. The Sanitorium was devastated by fire in February 1902. Having just paid twenty dollars for WEAA's *Heavenly Letter*, Kellogg tried dropping hints to WEAA, 'we are going through rather deep water now on account of the fire, so of course will not be able to pay what such valuable articles as yours are worth; but I know you are not writing for money but for the good of the common cause for which we are all working.'[520] Kellogg confirmed *Heavenly*

Letter had been published in *The Signs of the Times* in California, granting WEAA's request to re-use. I have not managed to trace this but given WEAA never wasted copy, some of the content might be found in his later articles on Italian Chapbooks[521], and on Wynkyn de Worde.[522]

It is impossible to know exactly what WEAA earned from his reviews, articles, and books but it may well have been more than Walmsley realised. There were no standard payments across the communities of print. In 1896 R Campbell of the Independent Order of Rechabites offered WEAA £10 for his paper, to be published privately, not associated with the Rechabites, and sent for review to all the temperance papers for it was 'worthy of a very large circulation.'[523] Frustratingly he did not name the paper. A year later William Andrews paid £10 for WEAA's substantial book, *Echoes of Old Lancashire*, the terms being 500 copies and copyright to WEAA in three years. WEAA generously sent a free copy to his needy correspondent for many years, John Pickford, now Rector at Woodbridge. Pickford seems to have been as obsessed by his poverty as by literature.

Much as WEAA's circles enjoyed the companionship of literature and scholarly pursuits, it would be naïve to pretend there was no Grub Street side to the Manchester authoring life. Patrick Joyce's study of the context of Edwin Waugh's inner demons is a valuable guide to the shadows of this world.[524] WEAA was determinedly cheerful but knew suffering both personally and amongst his friends. It was a hard life, however illuminated by literature. WEAA was fortunate to have the *Guardian* post.

One way or another, through his day jobs and freelancing, text put bread on his family's table. As WEAA wrote in 1879, 'My entire working life has been passed either in library or literary work.'[525]

Progress
WEAA went from strength to strength as a writer, pouring out articles, pamphlets, journalistic pieces for local newspapers, papers for societies, translations, and his own poems. As a recognised professional, he generally had no difficulty in placing his articles. Indeed, societies and editors were anxious to obtain his contributions.

Stricter disciplinary approaches developed towards the end of the nineteenth century. Few antiquarians were invited to join the *English Historical Review*, the Oxford journal

that was the mouthpiece of the new academic historians, but in 1885 the sub-editor Reginald Lane Poole sent WEAA a prospectus, adding 'I hope you will be able to support, not by your name only but also as a contributor.'[526] WEAA took up the offer. He was sent books for review, and Poole was particularly keen to get articles from him on his 'South American researches.' WEAA's far ranging interests had been noted.

In this period, he kept up his contributions to *N&Q*, acted as editor for several publications, and assisted with friends' projects such as Charles Sutton's *A List of Lancashire Authors.*[527] Indeed he had been the first to 'greatly enlarge' the list, started by J H Nodal, then President of the MLC, revised and completed by Sutton. New enterprises were added to his portfolio.

He established himself in the review circuit so prized by George Gissing's *New Grub Street* crowd. His first review in the prestigious London journal *The Academy* appeared in February 1874. The subject was Francis Espinasse's *Lancashire Worthies*. Whilst being as positive as he could about Espinasse's

selection of worthies, there is a sense that WEAA was trying not to show off his own superior knowledge. There is again the lightness of touch that characteristically enlivens WEAA's writing, a soufflé of knowledge for the reader.
The Academy reviewers tended to be prominent authors, and it is to WEAA's credit that whenever Lancashire cropped up the editors now called on his expertise. He had cornered the market again in a fashion that the *New Grub Street* crew would have envied. He produced entertaining articles on Tim Bobbin, the English Dialect Society, the *Manchester Grammar School Register* (a seemingly innocuous work that sparked off a literary feud), the Lancashire Library, and then ventured outside the field to Cumberland Worthies, and Boethian Contractions. And as Sutton said these articles were followed by 'various others.'[528]

The articles in the *English Cyclopaedia* demonstrated his talent for researching subjects outside his usual framework, communicating his findings with admirable clarity. Independently he produced some direct political commentaries such as *What is*

the War about? Remarks on the War between Russia and Turkey. This papmphlet was published in 1877 and may have drawn C P Scott's attention to WEAA's potential for the *Guardian* editorial team.

Apart from *Owd Dan's Fiddle* published in the *Guardian* in 1890, like many others WEAA had largely given up writing in dialect. However, he was still contributing to *Ben Brierley's Journal*, with its mixed mainstream, local and dialect content in the 1880s.

He produced a light play for amateurs in 1898, *Honesty the Best Policy*.[529] This is more of a drawing room comedy, elevated somewhat from his earlier effort *Exchange No Robbery* with its Punch and Judy man, Brummagen Bill, and dialect. According to a handwritten note on the MCLA copy, this anonymous play was adapted by WEAA from *Le Testament de Madame Patural*. WEAA may have produced others for Heywood's popular drama series, *Copyright Plays for the Use of Amateurs*.

WEAA's exuberance spills over into an entertaining mixture of styles and categories. He endowed even his articles on botany or natural history with a literary twist. Towards the end of the century, as disciplines became specialised, this approach was

regarded as old-fashioned and some of his proposals were rejected.

In 1876 he had his first collection of translated poems, *Exotica*,[530] privately printed. It is indeed an exotic collection, representing five languages, French, German, Italian, Latin and Spanish, and forty authors. It was anonymous but friends knew WEAA was the author, and his name has been added to the BML copy. It is often difficult to work out which of WEAA's recent works are being referred to in AP correspondence and the congratulations in 1876 may be for *Nixon*, *Exotica*, or some other 'delightful little book.'[531] There are two definite mentions of *Exotica*. One is from Mary Kelly, querying whether he is the translator and praising the poems as 'exquisitely done.'[532] The other is from John Bone, full of praise and intelligent consideration, 'I like your neat, terse & graceful "Exotica," – though as regards some of them I should have preferred to call them "Imitations" or "Borrowings," (only I should have found some prettier word, - which I can't find just now)- rather than "translations."'[533] Bone has taken the trouble to compare some of the poems with the originals and his opinion has weight.

Newspapers

WEAA maintained contact with the newspaper editors who had encouraged him in earlier years. Even as a *Guardian* employee, he produced items for other newspapers and solicited commissions. There is a response in AP from the Manchester Evening News Office that it might be possible to occasionally print 'sketches of this character' at twelve shillings per column. AP shows that WEAA continued to publish pieces in the *Manchester City News*, the *Manchester Examiner*, the *Ashton Reporter,* and others. The *Manchester Evening Mail* started in 1874, but this was avowedly ultra-Conservative and WEAA never appeared in its pages. Cuttings from one of his finest journalistic pieces, *The Round of the Clock*, published in the *Manchester Weekly Post*, survive in MCLA, donated by Ernest in 1930. As already described, John Howard Nodal had many links with WEAA. From 1871 to 1904, Nodal was editor of the *Manchester City News*, the main newspaper for local literary and scientific societies, and he commissioned articles from WEAA. WEAA contributed to the newspaper's *Notes and Queries*. Nodal ran the satirical magazine *Sphinx* and was on the staff of the *Saturday Review*: both published pieces

from WEAA.

Literary Agency

Early in 1876, Trübner asked WEAA to refute in the *Guardian* and another newspaper some nonsense about the Russells, published in a book by Lord Amberley. Exchanging favours, he then offered practical help with WEAA's scheme for setting up a literary agency in Manchester, 'As regards your plan to open a literary agency at Manchester. You must know best whether there be a book-loving and a book buying public at Manchester. I have never been able to do much there myself, but I shall certainly be delighted to have you as my Manchester agent.'[534]

Other AP letters suggest that WEAA did indeed launch an agency, albeit in a small way. He was well positioned for such an enterprise, having freely helped tyro authors over the years. WEAA showed good sense as well as imagination in trying this new way to earn some income. I have not traced any further information but perhaps the fees WEAA earned through activities such as proof reading and editing were linked to this agency.

Testimonial Fund

In the summer of 1878, John Evans, his *Guardian* colleague, ran a testimonial for WEAA on behalf of the MLC and MSS, keeping WEAA informed of the donations. He also forwarded to WEAA several letters received in response to the appeal; these are now in AP.

The comments are mainly positive, recognising how much work WEAA had undertaken for both societies. Most correspondents use terms such as worthy, indefatigable, tenacious, and admirable in respect to WEAA as a secretary and one sums him up as a 'thoroughly good fellow.'[535] A correspondent in Bredbury succinctly summarised the general feeling, 'He has deserved the well wishes of every member, and must, I am sure, have sacrificed much valuable time, both in that and so many other Societies, in which he is a prime mover.'[536] The maximum for contributions was set at one guinea. However, times were hard, and some struggled to give even half a guinea. One correspondent sent a cheque but fulminated against newspapers, 'everybody except the Newspaper proprietors are losing money – but you gentleman are reaping a nice harvest just now…'[537] R D Rusden crossly replied that only affluent members should be asked for money and there should be no limit, 'Friend Axon is, however, a richer man than I am.'[538]

Outright refusals were rare. Only one correspondent testily replied that he did not know WEAA as he had been away from the

city for some years, 'I am a little in the dark as to the object for which the aid is solicited, or who Mr. Axon is.'[539] Thomas Ashton of Ford Bank, Didsbury, objected to testimonials and he was certainly not prepared to contribute to one for WEAA, 'Testimonials have become so universal that it is fast becoming an insult to offer one.'

Evans closed the testimonial down in July, 'As I have now pretty well exhausted the grounds, anyway as far as I could do it single-handed…'[540] He informed WEAA that the total stood at one hundred and twenty pounds. Money continued to come in, including two guineas from John Fraser of *The Tobacco Plant* with the joke message, 'the contribution of saint Nicotinious to the Axon Testimonial.'[541]

Presentation

Over fifty gentlemen attended the presentation at '12.30 p.m. prompt' on Thursday 18 July 1878. They gathered at the Memorial Hall, Albert Square, a magnificent building, still standing today. The Memorial Hall, designed by the architect Thomas Worthington in the Venetian Gothic style, opened in 1866 and soon become a popular venue for many Manchester societies.

James Crossley, the legendary bibliophile, was absent from the company. Mr H H Howorth, F.S.A., explained in his speech that James Crossley was facing the devastating move of his home and library of sixty-five thousand books to new quarters, a calamity at his age. The audience of literary gentleman would have shuddered in sympathy at Howorth's reference to such 'shattering of his

household gods.'

The President of MSS, Mr. Thos. Dickins, was the chair and H. H. Howorth gave the presentation. He emphasised WEAA's 'services in the cause of local culture,' placing him firmly in the category of those students who, however busy, work hard behind the scenes to help others. He added a note of caution with a reference to WEAA's health and 'their hope that he would not tax a physique not too robust with a heavier burden than it could bear.'

WEAA in his reply focused on his familiar line that 'the man of letters should above everything recognise the duties of a citizen, and instead of secluding himself in his pleasant study, bring the fruit of his researches as a contribution to the daily life of the commonwealth.'

The sum now totalled one hundred and thirty-four pounds and eleven shillings, nearly equivalent to his full year's salary. It is easy to imagine the joy this must have brought WEAA.

WEAA stumbled at the end of his speech, overwhelmed by gratitude both to John Evans who had unexpectedly instigated the testimonial and to all his friends, saying of himself 'he could boast of no brilliant talents, he had special hindrances to hamper his works, and he held firmly to some opinions which were contrary to popular prejudices.' Unusually he muddled his words, suffering as he said from 'the disease of "suppressed eloquence"' but 'there was behind his feeble phrases a reality which they could not express.'

As well as this rare sight of an emotional WEAA, the printed report is illustrated with a frontispiece sketch of WEAA by his friend and occasional collaborator, the renowned Thomas Raffles Davidson. Principally remembered as an architectural historian, this is a rare departure for Davidson and judging by the photographs of WEAA an accurate as well as sensitive portrait. The report also includes Charles Sutton's invaluable list of WEAA's main writings 'since the commencement of his literary career some dozen years ago.' Minor pamphlets and articles were omitted. The list finishes with the titles of twenty-six periodicals all lumped together without further detail beyond the fact WEAA contributed to those too. Most bibliographical attempts to encompass WEAA's writing end up the same way.

Pallas

In an odd echo of the Crichton Club days, Joseph Alley launched a literary periodical, *Pallas*, published by himself, price one penny.[542] The contributors were unpaid, supposedly tempted by the prize of one guinea offered for the best essay, 'As 252 copies of *Pallas* had to be sold just to reach this sum every week, perhaps this is one of the reasons why the journal was short-lived.'[543]

JRL have preserved what are probably the only copies in existence of the two numbers that appeared on 1 and 8 December 1883. No more issues followed. This JRL copy once belonged to WEAA and is precious for his annotations of some of the authors hidden behind initials or pseudonyms. WEAA pencilled in their real names, including his own name for 'Dudley Armytage', author of the melodramatic tale of *The Local Preacher's Story*, and for 'D.A', author of an essay *Some Armless People*. WEAA had investigated this odd topic via *N&Q*. The second essay prize for *Inter-Oceanic Canals* went to W R Credland and WEAA revealed him as the poet Claudio in the first issue. Alley had ambitions for his 'First-class Literary Journal' and his friends certainly

rallied round for the fun but perhaps it was rather too wide ranging for most tastes.

Progressing from Pamphlets to Books

In his hilltop period WEAA moved from pamphlets and articles to editing and writing substantial books. He was commissioned to edit, complete or to write six books of which two are still significant today: *An Architectural and General Description of the Town Hall, Manchester*, published 1878, and *Annals of Manchester*, published 1886. He now had more letters after his name to proclaim his membership of various elite societies. These appear proudly in various combinations on the title pages of his books, M.R.S.L, F.S.S., 'Member of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester, &c. &c.'

As a young man, WEAA had formed good relationships with local publishers, booksellers, and printers, principally Abel Heywood, his son Abel Heywood Jr, his nephew John Heywood, Hurst Brothers, the Pitmans, Tubbs & Crystal, and then Tubbs and Brook. He knew Richard Gill as the manager of the *Manchester Examiner* printing works, and when he set up his own business, Gill printed several of his pamphlets. Gill later

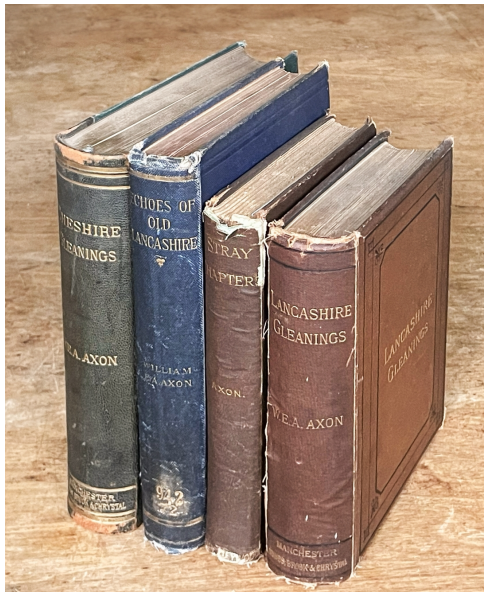
handled printing for LCAS and was a member. WEAA had long been involved with Trübner in London, and Adlard who printed the RSL journals. It was good steady business to have contracts with the societies. All these contacts came into play as he moved into producing books. As with his pamphlets, his books emerged from a varying mixture of self-publishing, commission, collaboration, and subscription.

In 1877, John Heywood published WEAA's *Handbook of the Public Libraries of Manchester and Salford* and in 1888 his *Stray Chapters in Literature, Folklore and Archaeology*.[544] There was a subscription list for the *Handbook* but not for *Stray Chapters*. It is not clear whether John Heywood took all the risk for *Stray Chapters* or whether WEAA contributed to the printing.

As WEAA wrote in his Preface, much of The *Handbook of the Public Libraries of Manchester and Salford* had already been published as occasional articles in the *Manchester City News*. It was and is an extremely useful resource, especially with the detailed descriptions of collections, and the appendices cover wider

topics such as cataloguing, bibliography and organising small libraries. WEAA's appendix on cataloguing is entitled *The Art of Cataloguing*, in homage to Crestadoro's book of the same title. WEAA's opening was long quoted in library circles, 'It has been said that every man thinks himself competent to drive a gig and to edit a newspaper. To this may be added "and to catalogue books."'

Subscribers enabled the publication of two hardback collections of new and reprinted WEAA essays, *Lancashire Gleanings* in 1883 and *Cheshire Gleanings* in 1884 by Tubbs, Brook & Chrystal. Although a standard method of funding publication, subscription seems to have been a tricky business. WEAA later commented he did not like the method.



In the 1880s, WEAA became involved with more non-Manchester publishers, notably William Andrews of Hull, Swan Sonnenschein, Elliott Stock, and Fisher Unwin, the last three all London based.

Editor

WEAA progressed significantly in the role of editor. He covered for Ben Brierley in 1879 and was editor of the *British Architect* for three years. George Milner, the President of MLC, was devastated when WEAA resigned as editor of the MLC's *Manchester Quarterly* in 1888. Milner sent a cheque, pleading with WEAA not to give up, 'I really don't see who would adequately take your place.'[545] WEAA had edited the *Manchester Quarterly* since 1882. At some stage in the same year, he became editor of the *VM* and perhaps this affected his

decision as even he must have realised being editor for two major society journals would be too onerous. He was also severely ill when he resigned.

The Painful Lesson of *The Field Naturalist*

WEAA had ambitions for his own projects, principally a new scientific journal, *The Field Naturalist and Scientific Student*, published around 1882.[546] There must have been criticism of the plan; WEAA was reported as defending the prospective journal at a meeting of the MSS in 1881. Charles Darwin praised the idea but refused a paper, 'I have been interested & amused by the essay which you were so kind as to send me, & which shows a wonderful amount of research.-Your plan of a journal seems an excellent one & I wish it success but I cannot offer to contribute an article to it, for I have made it a rule not to write in Periodicals except to communicate new facts.'[547] It is a shame not to know which essay WEAA had sent to Darwin. The letter is in the autograph collection at JRL, compiled by Ernest.

WEAA later admitted that 'those for whom it was specially intended have not responded in

the manner that was anticipated.'[548] Contributors did not rush forward with free copy in the anticipated *N&Q* manner although Heywood's suggestive line in the advertisements for the *Field Naturalist*, 'The Size of *N&Q*' should have put it in their minds.

WEAA was not easily daunted and despite the difficulties managed to pull together a rich mixture of diverse material. WEAA roped in Ernest and any friend who might count as an expert. W B Ellis, John Plant and Leo Grindon all helped – and WEAA rather slyly suggested Darwin, Longfellow and T H Huxley were contributors when he was, in fact, just quoting them. He authored eleven articles, under his own name, as Dudley Armytage and as the Manchester Pythagorean.

There were plenty of advertisements but few reviews.

The *Dundee Courier* did its lukewarm best for Issue no.3, 'Some interesting letters by Professor Schiraper will be found in the number, and Dr Allinson has a curious article "How Animals Become Carnivorous." His theory is ingenious, whether it correct or not. The other articles are too numerous to particularise, but we are sure the work will be valued by all naturalists under whose notice it comes.'[549]

WEAA must have been discouraged by the reception as *The Field Naturalist* ceased after a year, doomed by the scrappy literary,

antiquarian, scientific mix, and perhaps those unlikely theories. The collected volume, edited by WEAA, and published by Heywood, makes fascinating reading but the content is too much of a rag bag.

However, it had its fans. In 1909 one of WEAA's new Welsh correspondents, John Griffith, praised both his *Divination by Books* and the *Field Naturalist*. He took his own peculiar view, singling out the article on Griffins by Sir Henry H. Howorth, 'I have found most useful in proof of a theory of mine that the Arctic Circle is Apollo's birthplace – the region where the sun in winter disappears for three days.'[550]

Four Professional Works

It is hard to select just a few examples from WEAA's commercial corpus. These four demonstrate WEAA's versatility as professional editor, historian, and journalist.

The Mechanic's Friend, 1875

WEAA's first commissioned book under his own name must be *The Mechanic's Friend, a Collection of Receipts and Practical Suggestions…,* published in 1875 by Trübner. Original editions of this book, beautifully illustrated with many diagrams and woodcuts, are now rare and expensive. Clearly written in a friendly style, it was aimed at the professional workman, the amateur workman and those who wish to pursue a totally new line for a hobby. It provides a valuable reflection of the

appeal and excitement of Victorian engineering.

WEAA was the editor, selecting, revising, and condensing the contributions, grouping the topics into chapters, and providing an index. The contributions represented the efforts of many individual authors, originally published in the journal, the *English Mechanic*. In his preface, WEAA recognised the value of shared problem solving that emerged from the original articles, very much in the *N&Q* mode. To WEAA, this communication of individual experience was more important than 'any mere theory or tradition.' He was sympathetic to the amateur workman's explorations, 'Whether they want to skeletonize the leaf of a plant, or to construct a steam-propeller for a model boat ; to make a sky-rocket or an electric clock ; an artificial handkerchief, they will not look in vain.' Certainly 'The Yachtsman,' running the Queries column in *The People's Friend*, was grateful for a 'a lot of information upon the system of railway block signalling.'[551]

As well as engineering the book includes sections on houses, gardens, photography, and aquaria. WEAA's great-great grandson, Roger

Axon, an engineer himself, praised the book, 'What I also love is that amongst the book, in with the fireworks, is the recipe for gunpowder. I already knew it from my misspent youth, but I just could not imagine it in a book nowadays. (Incidentally, I will not be trying that recipe).'[552]

***The Round of the Clock in Manchester,* 1876**

In his list of WEAA's main works, Sutton included the twenty-four articles in the *Manchester Weekly Post* for 1876, entitled *The Round of the Clock in Manchester*.

The Biograph and Review, later highlighted the work, surely reflecting WEAA's own regard, 'His acquaintance with every phase and variety of town life is shown in a series of papers on "The round of the Clock in Manchester," which appeared in a local newspaper.'[553]

Ernest Axon presented the first nineteen of these articles to MCLA in 1930 together with WEAA's pencilled list of the titles. The rest I managed to decipher from the microfilm at MCLA, the only existing source for these issues of the *Manchester Weekly Post*. The microfilm is poor quality and one day the articles will no longer be accessible. Between two and three

columns in length, they were published anonymously from 22 July through to 30 December 1876.

The vivid descriptions sprang from WEAA's intimate knowledge of Manchester and its street life. They represent some of WEAA's best journalism although the discursive digressions are a distraction for the modern reader. In the darker articles, WEAA does not spare the reader the full impact of poverty, brutality and violence or the hopelessness of children born into such chaos. His background gave him an advantage over the usual middle-class observer; he wrote with the confidence of one familiar with such scenes. His perspective enabled him to enjoy the pretensions of *A Conversazione*, and as he called it the 'border-lines which separate Bohemia from Bowdon.'[554] As an instigator of Conversaziones at the VS, WEAA was in a prime position to comment.

There is probably no better picture of 1870s Manchester life than these articles. WEAA evidently intended them for publication as a book for some of the pieces in MCLA display marked passages in the printed cuttings.

The Annals of Manchester, 1886

WEAA was quite right that the immense

Annals of Manchester 'is virtually a new work, owing to the many changes and additions that have been made by the present editor.' WEAA has always been known as its author rather than editor.

Annals of Manchester was published by John Heywood in 1886, supported by a substantial list of subscribers. The large edition, priced at twelve shillings and sixpence, was only available to subscribers. The ordinary edition cost seven shillings and sixpence.

WEAA's innovation of an index was a remarkable feat. According to his grandson Geoffrey, this was compiled by Ernest.[555]The whole book runs to 456 pages, followed by lists of subscribers, booksellers and WEAA's updated list of his works, *Books and Pamphlets*.

WEAA added entries for 1875 to 1885 to the *Annals* and substantially revised the original entries. As with his *LNQ* feature, friends like John Eglington Bailey and Charles Sutton helped with the labour. WEAA's talent for obituary again comes to the fore. Terry Wyke singled out his 'masterly compression.' He also mentioned how even WEAA could not cover all events and there are omissions of cricket

championships, for example.[556]

The work was well received with most reviews admiring the colossal labour of the compiler and the marvellous index. Useful as it was and still is for reference, it was found to be readable in itself, 'the goodly volume gives the history of the city of which—let hope—some of us are, in spite of its smoke and its ugliness, just a little proud.'[557] It was accepted that errors in a history of such size and density were inevitable, but they generally seemed minor.

The novelist, Mrs Banks, obsessional writer of footnotes, immediately began to annotate her copy with her own history and recollections. She told WEAA she had pasted in the account of his MLC and MSS testimonial, adding 'The value of that book of yours as a work of reference is not easily estimated. Years will but add to its value.' [558] Her annotated copy eventually came into the hands of E L Burney and inspired him to write her biography.

Annals became a standard reference source for Manchester history. There are several AP examples of correspondents asking about topics years later, usually with expressions of

admiration for the compiler.

In 1998, The Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society published Terry Wyke's study of WEAA's *Annals.*[559] Terry Wyke ended with a plea for the *Annals* to be resurrected, 'It is regrettable that the Annals was not continued after 1886.' Professor Donald Cardwell initiated the project before his death in 1998. Terry Wyke on behalf of the Society includes an *Annals of Manchester* feature in its journal, *Manchester Memoirs*.

***Manchester a Hundred Years Ago,* 1887**

A year after *Annals*, John Heywood reprinted James Ogden's *Manchester A Hundred Years Ago*, first published in 1783. WEAA was the editor, announced on the title page as Vice-President of the LCAS. In his Introduction WEAA packed in a detailed account, dotted with quotations, of James Ogden the poet and episodes in radical history.

The local legend of Smithy Door Street owes its survival to WEAA's inclusion in the Introduction. The debt to WEAA was acknowledged when the story appeared in a *Manchester Times Notes and Queries* column.[560]

WEAA noted the changes between past and present Manchester and in a typical fashion, looked cheerfully at the future, 'Manchester in the eighteenth century was rejoicing over the Bridgewater Canal as Manchester in the nineteenth century is rejoicing at the prospect of its absorption in the still greater scheme of the Ship Canal, by which commerce and industry will, it may be hoped, receive so great a stimulus that our past progress will be eclipsed in the greater prosperity of the future.'[561]

Enter Four Publishers
Four mainstream publishers made their first contact with WEAA in this period, Swan Sonnenschein, William Andrews, Elliot Stock, and Thomas Fisher Unwin.

From AP it appears that William Swan Sonnenschein and WEAA were involved between 1882 and 1883, but this did not develop into a lasting relationship. Henry Thomas Crofton, Manchester solicitor and antiquarian, had recommended his friend WEAA for a work of gypsy folk tales that he was unable to undertake himself. By this time WEAA, like many other linguists and folklorists, had become fascinated by the new field of gypsy studies. WEAA's work was to be produced in 1883 as part of *The Illustrated*

Library of Fairy Tales series, an ambitious attempt to publish in separate volumes both literary and collected folk tales of all nations. These were handsome productions, bound it green and gilt with many illustrations.

William Andrews was associated with WEAA from 1884 to 1907, a friendship lasting until Andrews died in 1908. There are sixty-seven colourful letters from Andrews in AP. Andrews was a genial Hull publisher and WEAA became one of his stable of writers, a loyal supporter who did not turn away when financial disaster struck. They shared antiquarian and literary interests. Initially Andrews approached WEAA to write biographical sketches of Edwin Waugh and Ben Brierley for his compilations of Northern poets. He also wanted poems from WEAA himself, especially his *Ancoats Skylark*, 'It touches the heart.'[562] In their first years of association Andrews promised to review WEAA's *Stray Chapters* and in the usual reciprocal deal pursued WEAA for a review of one of his publications in the *Guardian*.

WEAA and Fisher Unwin had some contact in 1884, but their full connection came later, recorded with one hundred and twenty-three AP letters from 1903 to 1913.

Elliot Stock (1838-1911), like Sonnenschein, was a London

publisher. He had been apprenticed to a bookseller, B L Green, brother of the Dr Green of the Religious Tract Society. Stock acquired the business, transforming it to publishing house. Initially he focused on religious material, then expanded into facsimile first editions and bibliographic journals. He also published works on folklore and folksong. The shared interests with WEAA are obvious.

The impression from his AP letters is that he could be a testy man to deal with. He founded *The Antiquary* but quarrelled with his editor, Edward Walford. Walford tried to warn WEAA from becoming involved with him, finding his association with Stock difficult, 'I have a great respect for you personally. I hate Mr Stock cordially, as half the world knows.'[563]

The Elliot Stock AP correspondence of sixty-three letters runs from 1880 to 1898, with one final letter in 1908.

In 1883 Stock published a 'verbatim reprint' of Caxton's 1474 *Game and Playe of the Chesse*. WEAA was the editor and wrote a seventy-page introduction, giving a masterly bibliographic history as well as a commentary on the nature and value of the work. The book was beautifully produced on quality paper with sharp copies of the woodcuts from Caxton's second edition. Robert H Wilson, writing in 1947, singled out WEAA's unique observations on the variations between Caxton's editions, disregarded by the other scholarly authorities of the time.[564]

Stock founded several journals including the *Antiquary* and *Book Prices Current*. Like WEAA he was conscious of the needs of less affluent readers. One reviewer described the *Antiquary* as 'one of the cheapest magazines published, and can always be perused with profit. Its "Notes of the Month" set down all the finds and records of ancient times in short paragraphs, keeping the reader in touch with all matters coming within scope of the journal.'[565] WEAA was a regular contributor.

Appealing to New Readers*: Book Lore*

In 1884 Stock rejected WEAA's proposal of *Chats round the Table* as 'not right for publication'[566] but then asked WEAA if he would have time for a bibliographic work 'which I think would be congenial to you.'[567] He later gave details of his plan for a less technical journal to replace *The Bibliographer*, aimed at 'the more popular class of reader.' The scheme had to be kept secret 'for if it gets out, we shall have half a dozen people copying us.' Stock and WEAA worked together on the name, 'we must keep the title dark for the present' and the selection of articles.

The new journal was *Book Lore*, and Stock had judged his timing well. Literacy and widespread education had expanded the market for all types of publications. Stock was aware there would be a new readership for bibliography and book history, reaching beyond the traditional audience of elite scholars and collectors with deep pockets. Most of the newspaper reviews made reference to this new readership, 'The great army of bibliophiles,'[568] or, quoting Stock, 'The publisher Mr. Elliot Stock, says:-" For one book-collector in past there are now hundreds, who are diligently studying and gathering up that which is interesting valuable, or curious in literature.""[569]

Elliot Stock saw WEAA as a perfect fit for editor of *Book Lore*. A scholar despite the odds, WEAA understood the frustrations of the book collector with limited resources. WEAA also brought in library expertise. Stock's *Bibliographer* had battled against the *Library Chronicle* with its link with the LA and the growing numbers of librarians as its loyal readers. WEAA's coverage of library matters in *Book Lore* proved an additional draw.

Book Lore Content

WEAA not only edited the journal but wrote for it, producing articles, named and unnamed. It is frustrating that only five articles were named but it did not look good if the editor broadcast that he has written much of the content. WEAA repeated his *LNQ* trick of sending in his own queries and answering them. He also dropped in mentions of his forthcoming publications such as the *Annals of Manchester*, the latter with a hint that it was open for subscribers. Articles on Chinese books, *The Golden Legende*, the Cheshire printer John Johnson, and the legend of the Cross, suggest WEAA's hand but then so do several others. *An Indian Astrological Almanac* is surely by WEAA with its references to William Lloyd Garrison, one of his heroes. It is followed by *Who was the Dark Lady of the Sonnets?* a favourite WEAA topic. *Shelley and Vegetarianism*, although unnamed here was one of WEAA's most renowned articles in VS circles.[570]

WEAA as editor attracted both scholarly contributors and readers. As ever he involved his friends in the enterprise to mutual advantage. Like the weird sisters, WEAA,

Sutton and Credland, chronicled the dead in *Book Lore*, when 'Death has been making a raid on the bibliographers.'[571] WEAA covered Edward Edwards,
Sutton covered Henry Bradshaw, whilst Credland was given Henry Stevens.[572]

Book Lore contributors tended to be influential scholars or clerics, and Stock knew that scoops like borrowing a manuscript from Earl Spencer 'will do us good in many quarters.'[573] As editor WEAA had the responsibility of making it clear contributors were not paid. The correspondence between Stock and WEAA shows how closely Stock kept an eye on matters. It is rather surprising that there is occasional ridicule in the journal at the very people it was aimed at, the amateur book collectors, but then the Victorians had a robust sense of humour.

Book Lore was an impressive production, designed to appeal as an object as well as for the content. It was advertised as being in the ancient style on 'antique paper with rough edges.' The small woodcut illustrations, the crafted font and layout make the volumes attractive to handle. Thankfully there are no

archaic long ‘s’s.

Closure

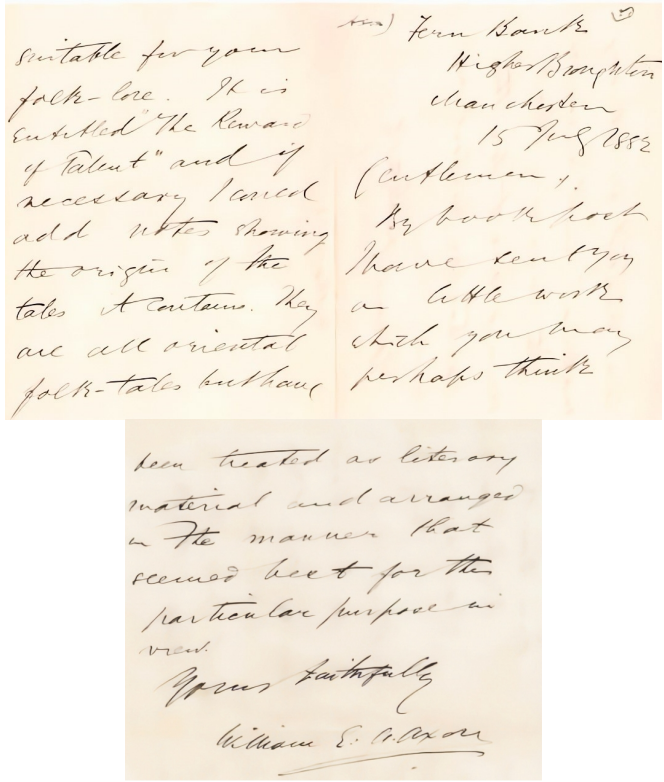
The reviews were generally favourable, but the journal was still not quite as the Elliot Stock required. Eventually the ever-restless Stock started planning the *Bookworm* to replace it. Fortunately, WEAA had grown tired of the editorship and Stock, much to his relief, could move on without upsetting his friend. WEAA had received a monthly cheque for his efforts as editor and Stock with disarming honesty commented that ‘the work is troublesome and the pay inadequate.’ Stock asked WEAA ‘to surrender the whip at the conclusion of the present volume’[574] and *Book Lore* closed in 1887.

In 1947 Arthur Sherbo analysed all three journals, looking for disregarded riches. He found *Book Lore* more rewarding than *The Bibliographer* ‘although none of the gleanings will generate much excitement.’[575] The *Bookworm* yielded the richest harvest. Claude A. Prance admired all three, ‘they contain much practical information: articles on bookbinding, bookplates, dates in old books, the care of boos, bookcases and kindred matters dear to the heart of the bibliophile.

Elliot Stock should occupy an important position with lovers of old books, old ways and antiquarian lore.'[576] Stock was a hard-headed publisher and businessman, not adverse to conflict or upsetting rivals, but he valued his friendship with WEAA. Winding up *Book Lore*, he wrote to WEAA that 'the friendship that has opened up between us is one I have enjoyed, & for this also let me thank you.'[577] Stock and WEAA continued to be associated through various ideas and enterprises. At WEAA's request, Stock noted that his daughter Sophie was available for indexing work. Between 1889 and 1892 WEAA and Stock worked together on a classified collection of scriptural texts together with a concordance of Christ's words. It is not apparent if this was ever published. In 1898 Stock was considering a reprint of the *Book of Chesse*, an opportunity for WEAA to amend the preface if he wished. The last proposal was from WEAA in 1908, an idea for reprinting James Boswell's *Doranda* with an introduction by WEAA. Stock was interested but wanted a complicated arrangement with WEAA's being responsible for some copies.

Stock and Folk Lore

The Antiquary with occasional articles by WEAA continued as one of Stock's main publications. *Folk Lore Record* ran from 1878 to 1882, published directly by the Folklore Society. From 1883 to 1889 Stock published the *Folk Lore Journal* on behalf of the Folklore Society. This was in turn replaced by *Folk Lore,* published by the Folklore Society. WEAA and other northern folklorists were not part of the Folklore Society inner circle as it was very much London based. WEAA was not a contributor. He did propose *The Reward of Talent,* his 'little work' on a collection of oriental tales, to the Gentlemen of the Folk Lore Society. Presumably this was the work he had first discussed with Sonnenschein, and that still had not been placed. WEAA offered to add notes but admitted 'the tales have been treated as literary material and arranged in the manner that seemed best for the particular purpose in view.'[578] WEAA was aware folklorists had reservations over literary versions. In the end, *The Reward of Talent*, found a home in MLC's *Manchester Quarterly*. WEAA never wasted copy.


suitable for your folk-lore. It is entitled "The Reward of Talent" and if necessary I could add notes showing the origin of the tales it contains. They are all oriental folk-tales but have

Fern Bank
Higher Broughton
Manchester
15 Aug 1882

Gentlemen,
By book-post I have sent you a little work which you may perhaps think

been treated as literary material and arranged in the manner that seemed best for the particular purpose in view.

Yours faithfully
William E. Axon

Library journals were even more complicated in their evolution than folklore journals. Stock published the new journal *The Library* from January 1889 to 1898 on behalf of the Bibliographic Society. The journal continued, joining forces with John MacAlister of the LA. The LA published *The Library Chronicle* from 1884-1888 and then started the *Library Association Record* in 1899. Stock thought it unfair that the *Library Association Record* had a guaranteed audience of librarians. WEAA

wrote for all these journals, bearing with Stock's rants and the occasional rudeness of Pollard and MacAlister, editors of *The Library*. He was a welcome contributor to the ALA's *The Library Journal*.

From WEAA's perspective the long association with Elliot Stock through antiquarian, folklore, and bibliographic journals both reinforced and expanded the networks he had formed in his early period as a writer.

CHAPTER 16

LABOURS OF LOVE AND DUTY

In Memoriam: Dr. Samelson

WEAA was much in demand for obituaries and memorial notices. It must have been hard when he was personally mourning those he commemorated: he did not attempt to keep his grief out of such accounts.

In 1888 WEAA was stricken by the loss of two people he had treasured for a quarter of a century. His obituaries for both men, Dr Adolph Samelson and John Eglington Bailey appeared in the same issue of the *Manchester Quarterly*. Dr Samelson was one of his older mentors and Bailey an intimate friend as well as a revered scholar.

WEAA had an imaginative sympathy for those suffering from barriers to knowledge through disability. Health, diet, longevity, and polluted food were all issues he dealt with from a vegetarian perspective, much of his information being of interest to doctors. He was on hospital boards as well as being a valued associate of such professional men as Dr Samelson.

Dr Samelson was a wealthy ophthalmic surgeon, a well-known member of both the medical elite and MLC. WEAA and a Richard Newton of York were appointed as his executors. Dr Samelson died at Cannes and was buried there in the Protestant cemetery. Apart from paying the exorbitant fees, the executors had no hand in arranging the funeral, but they did have many large legacies and bequests to charity, mainly medical and educational, to deal with. The estate was worth nearly £5000. Both executors were left

legacies of £100 as well as personal effect, such as books and pictures. As an executor WEAA was appointed as the Hon. Life Governor of the Royal Benevolent College at Epsom.

There was great interest in the memorial WEAA was to write for MLC with one correspondent concerned that it should not be limited to the MLC audience. WEAA must have felt the pressure of doing justice to Dr Samelson without ignoring the difficult aspects of his character, his 'somewhat impatient temperament.' WEAA's notice turned out to be a masterpiece, covering Dr Samelson's radical background in Germany, his studies in Europe, and years of service in Manchester. WEAA describes the hours he spent in conversation with this very gifted and scholarly man, inspired by him to persevere on the reform path:

> 'I shall never forget those firmly compressed lips, those piercing eyes, and earnest expression of his, when referring to some favourite reforms he wished to advocate, and his mingled tone of despair and hope, as he emphasised that, although his years were too far advanced for him to see them accomplished, he felt sure that they would come in the day of us, the younger generation.[579]

Posthumous editing

WEAA was an old hand at editing historical works such as the *Annals of Manchester* and James Ogden's *Manchester A Hundred Years Ago*. It was a more emotional matter when he inherited the unfinished manuscripts of friends. Yet the effort of brought WEAA the

prestige of association as well as admiration for the skill with which he accomplished such difficult tasks.

The death of bibliophiles usually meant troublesome dealing over their libraries, papers, projects, and bereft families. Many of WEAA's old comrades had died: Elliot Stock commented, 'How the scythe has been mowing down the bibliographers lately!'[580] As old colleagues passed away, WEAA repeatedly found himself embroiled. For example, when Edward Kirk, a much-loved antiquarian and member of LCAS and MLC, died in 1886, it was WEAA who was expected to co-ordinate the condolences and to deal with all the papers he left, including difficult requests from interested parties. W T Watkin asked him to set 'anything in my line' aside as Mrs Kirk had promised him.[581] G H Adshead wanted a playbill he had lent Kirk returned, 'it may seem a small matter but I should not like to lose sight of it.'[582] The publisher William Andrews died in 1908 and William F Lawton, Chief Librarian of Hull Libraries, kindly tried to help his daughter by getting a good price for his library. He consulted WEAA over the offer from Mr Miles, the Leeds bookseller.

WEAA also is likely to have written the *Yorkshire Post* obituary with its sympathy for Andrews' literary work being 'of a fugitive nature, designed to fill a pleasant hour.'[583]

WEAA organised practical assistance for deceased friends' dependants, petitioning for pensions, and raising funds. John Bailey's widow and children, Mrs Henry Sutton and her daughter, Mrs Banks' daughter, were amongst those he tried to help. There was little sympathy for Miss Banks, Abel Heywood declaring he had been the 'larger loser' in arrangements with the family.[584] Even when not involved in sorting out their affairs, his appreciative obituaries brought comfort. Mrs Laura Cornelius Walford and Mrs Henry Fawcett expressed gratitude for his memorials of their husbands. In her anguished letter Mrs Walford referred to WEAA's last conversation with her husband that had brought him solace. WEAA offered to have Henry Fawcett's early essay on phonography published but his widow declined as it was 'quite a childish production & a fragment merely.'[585] WEAA tried to persuade her, but she was adamant.

WEAA took on the arduous tasks of

completing manuscripts, acting as posthumous editor for such renowned scholars as John Eglington Bailey, John Harland, William O'Conor, and Richard Wright Procter. WEAA had the unimaginably painful task of organising the posthumous publication of his daughter Kitty's stories, *The Tenants of Johnson's Court* which appeared in 1891, a year after her death.

John Harland's *Genealogy of the Pilkingtons of Lancashire,* 1875

WEAA posthumously edited John Harland's the *Genealogy of the Pilkingtons of Lancashire,* arranging its printing for private circulation.

John Harland (1806-1868) has already appeared in previous chapters. He was a legend in the north of England. After a hard childhood in Hull, he joined the *Hull Packet* as a printer's apprentice, soon developing into a talented journalist. In 1830 the *Guardian* poached him from the *Hull Packet,* and he became their indispensable chief reporter, famous for his self-taught shorthand. It is due to his impeccable reporting that there are authentic records of public speakers such as William Cobbett, Feargus O'Connor, John

Bright, Richard Cobden, Lord Palmerston, and the young Disraeli. Like C P Scott he inspired either affection or fear amongst the staff with his 'inflexible pursuit of perfection.'[586]

As well as his *Guardian* renown, Harland was famed as an antiquarian, much of his historical writing first appearing in the *Guardian.* Illness forced him to retire in 1860 and he devoted his remaining years to research. As WEAA noted, 'Before he died, he had edited fourteen volumes for the Chetham Society, revised the standard history of Lancashire, published collections of Lancashire folk-lore and ballads in his own name and other antiquarian works under the pseudonyms of Monkbarns, Jonathan Oldbuck and Crux.'[587]

Both WEAA and T T Wilkinson worked posthumously on some of Harland's texts, a heavy responsibility given Harland's status as an antiquarian. WEAA's *Bibliographical List of the Writings of John Harland Esq., F.S.A* was published in *The Reliquary* only a few months after Harland's death and was widely acclaimed as a resource.[588] It was published together with a biographical sketch by the

Guardian journalist James Croston, later one of WEAA's friends. Together the two articles form a valuable record of Harland's life and works.

Harland's interest in the Pilkingtons arose from his second marriage to
Eliza, daughter of Joseph Pilkington of Manchester. The genealogy was very much his pet project and before his death he passed all the material to WEAA, not just his notebooks but parcels of papers, letters, and seals. With the help of Harland's friends and a great deal of effort, WEAA pulled *Genealogy* together, inserting his own portions in double brackets.

The book is only sixty-four pages long but significant in the prestige it conferred on WEAA, especially in more genteel circles. As it was privately distributed there were no reviews, but AP correspondence indicates how highly the little work was regarded. In the following years several people wrote to WEAA seeking copies of this rarity.

Its appearance in 1875 inevitably reminded *Guardian* staff as well as antiquarians of their old colleague. WEAA's link with Harland brought him further into the limelight.

Richard Wright Procter's *The Barber's Shop,* 1883

Richard Wright Procter (1816-1881),

antiquarian writer, poet, barber, owner of a modest circulating library, frequenter of booksellers and Chetham's Library, was a literary father for the young WEAA. He too came from a poor background, started work as a barber at nine, and like WEAA explored the corners of his city, combining his literary 'mousings' with attending Poets' Corner at the Sun Inn, Long Millgate. One literary assembly on Thursday 24 March 1842 was recorded for all time in John Bolton Rogerson's delightful *The Festive Wreath.*[589] Procter was amongst the company, contributing his poem together with those from the iconic names of The Bard of Colour (Robert Rose), John Critchley Prince, Isabella Varley (later Mrs G Linnaeus Banks) and Elijah Ridings.

The splendidly hirsute WEAA knew more than most of the byways of beards, shaving and the 'hair-breadth adventures'[590] of the barber's shop when in 1883 he edited the revised edition of Richard Wright Procter's *The Barber's Shop.* WEAA was determined Procter's publishing plan should be completed.

WEAA's portrait of his beloved mentor in this book is one of the best memorials he wrote. It

is especially valuable as few knew Procter intimately. Another friend noted the shy Procter was 'personally unknown to most of the literary men of this city.'[591] WEAA gently slipped in an instance of Procter's kindness that had made a lasting impression. Describing Procter's reclusive lifestyle, WEAA wrote, 'Once only in later years was he known to break through these hermit habits, and then it was to visit a friend who was detained by sickness in his own home. Long will the memory of the pleasant afternoon dwell in my mind.' Procter's love of country rambles, the fells, and 'green trees and fresh air' all bound him to WEAA. There is a sense that R W Procter as well as his persona 'Sylvan' was the spirit of Old Manchester to WEAA.

It was probably WEAA who ensured the important items from Procter's library, including rare and in some cases unique local tracts, went to MCL.

William Anderson O'Conor's *Essays in Literature and Ethics,* 1889

The Rev. William Anderson O'Conor (originally spelt O'Connor), born in Cork in 1820, was a striking figure and a brilliantly intellectual thinker. He was rector of St. Simon and St. Jude's on Granby Row in Manchester,

a squalid district with a dwindling congregation that he looked after until his death in 1887. His powers were sadly wasted, and he became a tragic figure. WEAA was a close friend, from the MLC days down to the Anti-Vivisection movement in the 1880s. He admired him profoundly whilst others were perturbed by O'Conor's sometimes morbid personality, his wild ideas and the views expressed in his *History of the Irish People*.[592] They shared many a meeting for both campaigned for Thomas Horsfall's Manchester Art Museum. The MLC was O'Conor's refuge. The 'cordial sympathy' he received there, as WEAA recognised, provided a sanctuary for this frequently misunderstood man. The members greatly appreciated his charm, wit, and spell-binding eloquence.

After O'Conor's death in 1887, WEAA selected and edited his literary papers, adding a biographical introduction based on his *Guardian* obituary. The book, *Essays in Literature and Ethics*, was published in 1889 by J. E. Cornish of Manchester. In his brief biography, WEAA displayed understanding of his charismatic friend's psyche. He appreciated the brilliance of O'Conor's unconventional

writing and defended him with partisan sympathy. The piece speaks volumes for WEAA's broadness of mind. O'Conor's literary essays themselves are extremely graphic, visionary, and passionate. The reviewer in the *Guardian* praised the work highly, singling out from WEAA's 'sympathetic and considerate sketch' the comment, '"There was in Mr O'Conor that union of humour and deep melancholy that marked Cowper as it marked others of the prophetic race. It is this rare combination that gives them full sympathy with human joy and suffering."'[593]

Professor F W Newman, WEAA's free-thinking vegetarian friend, had known O'Conor well. In fact, O'Conor had dedicated his *History of the Irish People* to him. Newman commented with dry humour to WEAA that 'I found he had read my Phases of Faith and yet desired my friendship. I no longer wondered that he did not get on smoothly with the clergy.'[594] In the same letter Newman queried with WEAA why he had made no reference to the 1869 episode when O'Conor had suffered a very public breakdown that resulted in being confined for a period in the Preston Asylum. WEAA's reply is unknown but it can be

surmised he would not have seen this as relevant. WEAA was no gossip journalist.

John Eglington Bailey (1840-1888)

The early death of John Eglington Bailey was a tragedy, depriving Manchester of one of its finest scholars, a specialist in the realm of seventeenth century history. Bailey and WEAA shared many interests and belonged to the same range of societies. Like WEAA, Bailey was an avid *N&Q* correspondent as well as a contributor to the *Academy* and *DNB*.

As most of his friends were aware, Bailey's passion for Thomas Fuller dated from his youth. Thomas Fuller was a seventeenth century cleric, renowned for his prose style and wit rather than his theology. However, it was WEAA who knew the exact circumstance. He related that it was the Rev. William Gaskell, Bailey's tutor at the Owens College evening class, who inspired Bailey's interest by pointing out, 'the great interest and originality of Fuller's style, and the want in our biographical literature of an adequate memorial of his varied life, which was cast in a period so picturesque in aspect and so profoundly important for its struggle between great conflicting principles.'[595] Subsequently

in 1863, Bailey gave a 'bright and scholarly'[596] lecture *The Wit and Wisdom of Thomas Fuller* to the Manchester Phonographic Union. Bailey went on to develop the lecture into the masterly biography William Gaskell had wanted. The *Life of Thomas Fuller* appeared in 1874 and was widely acclaimed, gaining Bailey membership of the Society of Antiquaries.

Like WEAA, Bailey continued to delve into local history, to pour out books, pamphlets, papers, and contributions to *N&Q*, to edit works and to keep up an extensive correspondence with fellow antiquaries. From 1881 to 1885 he produced a corresponding journal, *The Palatine Note-Bo*ok. Ernest joked he had an uneasy feeling that his youthful contribution in the last issue might have 'killed the Note Book!'[597] Emma Bailey and WEAA tried to track down the 'little black book containing the Palatine Notebook Accounts' after his death.[598]

WEAA's care for his friend extended beyond his death: he helped the family, completed Bailey's major work on Fuller, and organised dispersal of his library.

Bailey's Struggles

WEAA supported Bailey through the painful

period of his illness and breakdown. Bailey asked him to assist completing his *DNB* entries and it appears WEAA did this.
In a joint paper with Ernest, *Henry Ainsworth, the Puritan Commentator*, WEAA explained in a footnote how he had taken over from Bailey, 'the pressure that ultimately proved fatal was already beginning to be felt, and to relieve him I undertook the task.'[599]Both Bailey and WEAA finished their connection with *DNB* with the publication of the C volume in 1888. Bailey has ten entries, finishing with Thomas Case and WEAA fifty-six, finishing with Crestadoro.

There are over a hundred letters from Bailey in AP, running from 1874 to 1888, many addressed from the Manchester warehouse where he was employed, Ralli Brothers on Peter Street. There are letters from his brother Charles, also sent from the Ralli Brothers, confiding the details of Bailey's illness, 'It is sadly true that my poor brother John is under restraint.'[600]

Bailey managed to write humorously about his illness and the last AP letters continue to be full of scholarly and local history matters. He

was concerned too for WEAA's health and full of gratitude for his kindness, writing a few months before his death 'I shall never forget your coming to see us in that cold weather in the (shorthand symbol), nor will my wife ; if we can do anything for you at any time let us know.'[601]

In his next letter Bailey expressed happiness that WEAA has dedicated his forthcoming book *Stray Chapters in Literature, Folk-Lore and Archaeology* to him, 'in affectionate testimony of a personal and literary friendship of many years.'[602] Bailey's final letter refers to WEAA's visit to see Bailey's shorthand collection. Bailey was full of fun about a manuscript of Dean Swift's that is reported to have turned up.

Following Bailey's Death

After Bailey's death on 23 August 1888, WEAA wrote a long obituary, published in the *Manchester Quarterly*[603] and in shortened form in the *Academy*.[604] WEAA wrote sympathetically of Bailey's struggles:

> 'All this was the work not of a man of ample means passing his days in scholarly leisure, but of one whose daily work, conscientiously and punctually performed, was in a

> Manchester warehouse where his position was one of trust and responsibility. Undoubtedly the strain was too great, and two years ago he broke down.'

WEAA did his utmost to help Bailey's widow Emma and four children. First was the sale of his library, 'one of such great scholarly value.' He suggested Credland should catalogue the books; Emma agreed but was worried about the expense.

Charles Sutton shared the immense task of sorting out Bailey's library, scrapbooks, notebooks, papers, as well as his cases of autograph letters and book plates. Both Paul Rylands and John Earwaker were keen to acquire the bookplates. Emma was concerned that WEAA and Sutton were ill with colds as well as coping with these burdens. WEAA missed the LA annual conference, held in October in Glasgow, and unusually did not send a paper to be read in his absence. Presumably this was because of the pressure of dealing with Bailey's affairs. Emma's grief was painful and WEAA as a close friend tried to support her. She wrote, 'I feel very aimless & disconsolate more so, instead of less, I think as time goes on.'[605]

Bailey, WEAA and Ruskin

WEAA dealt with an unpleasant episode when a copyright issue meant some American reprints of Ruskin's works had to be withdrawn from the library sale. A demand for the consequent legal fees was sent to Mrs Bailey. WEAA appealed in the strongest terms to Ruskin:

> ‘My only concern in the matter is that of a friend of Mrs Bailey. I have been trying to help the widow to dispose of the library to the best advantage for the benefit of her family. I venture to appeal to you for the exertion of your influence to secure a reduction of the bill which seems to me harsh and excessive and certainly falls as a heavy punishment upon an innocent and entirely blameless person.’[606]

The matter was picked up by Ruskin’s cousin, Joan Ruskin Severn, who was now in control of his affairs. She replied sympathetically to WEAA, and the outcome was probably favourable as there is no more AP correspondence.

Ruskin certainly owed both WEAA and Bailey a favour; Bailey had assisted WEAA in compiling *John Ruskin: a Bibliographical Biography*, first published by MLC and then as a pamphlet. Most of it was based on ‘the almost complete series of Mr. Ruskin’s works in the Manchester Free Library.’[607] There is some evidence that Ruskin did indeed appreciate WEAA’s efforts.

Although there are no letters from Ruskin in AP, Howard Mather of Wykeham Books very generously sent me photographs of two letters he had found in Ernest’s copy of *John Ruskin: a*

Bibliographical Biography. Written in July and August 1879, these suggest an ongoing correspondence as Ruskin addresses WEAA warmly. Perhaps their contact dates from the proposal in Manchester in 1878 for the formation of a Ruskin society. WEAA of course would have been very much involved in the Ruskin Society along with his friends T C Horsfall and Charles Rowley.

WEAA had sent Ruskin his lecture, presumably as read to MLC in March 1879 and to the Ruskin Society in May, and in the first letter Ruskin praises it highly, 'I am sincerely obliged by the careful and courteous manner in which your lecture is conceived and arranged, and very grateful for the attention shown therein to my books, which very honestly I can say, I want to be read for others' sakes, not mine.' In the second letter, responding to WEAA's request for an autograph and motto, Ruskin discusses his own ideas for a motto, mentioning his first use of a disguised name.

The Collected Sermons of Thomas Fuller (1891)

As well as sorting out paperwork, WEAA did not let Bailey's major work languish unpublished. Despite the pressures of work, conflicts with the IOGT, and devastating family bereavements, WEAA completed Bailey's *The Collected Sermons of Thomas Fuller, D. D.,* doubling Bailey's 600 pages to form 'two handsome volumes.'[608] This was published in January 1891 by Unwin Bros. as a limited subscription edition of 400 copies. WEAA included a short biography of Bailey,

based on his *Academy* obituary, as well as an extract from Ernest's list of Bailey's publications, published by the LCAS.[609] (This is wrongly attributed to WEAA in the DNB entry for Bailey.)

WEAA also included Bailey's 1863 lecture on Fuller. WEAA dedicated the work to his great friend, Professor John E. B. Mayor, at the University of Cambridge, Fuller's alma mater, playing down his part in the work, praising Bailey, and apologising for his own shortcomings. WEAA sounded a rare personal note. Finishing his dead friend's work was emotionally demanding and at the end of his hilltop period, WEAA was contending with his own tragedies:

> 'In you, my dear Professor Mayor, I am sure of a candid, a competent, and a kindly critic ; for you know that my task has been a labour of love and duty, prosecuted amidst the urgent pressure of a busy life, and amidst dark shadows of domestic sorrows. These volumes are to me a memorial of the beloved friend who was not permitted to end the work he had so well begun. They have been with me in busy Manchester, by the sands of our Lancashire estuaries, by the shores of North Wales, and by our southern coast, where first the Norman conqueror landed- with me, alas! Whilst watching dear ones fading out of life into eternity.'[610]

Fuller perhaps should be recognised as an early folklorist, gathering gossip on local history, oddities, and people. His contemporaries criticised him for talking to old women to glean obscure information. His *Worthies*, the scrapbook of notes, was published after his death, and is still a delightful read. It is understandable why Bailey and WEAA were drawn to him.

The narrative of Bailey and WEAA illustrates the extraordinary lengths WEAA would go to for his friends, even during his own grievous family troubles. The Bailey correspondence in AP merits further investigation for it contains much scholarly matter as well as the record of a rare friendship.

Shorthand

Michael Powell, the much-loved librarian of Chetham's died in 2019, a devastating loss to the city. I had been fortunate to discuss WEAA and John Eglington Bailey with him at the start of this biography. Michael believed that shorthand was the key to their remarkable output and activities. I noticed too that both WEAA and Bailey were in the habit of joining words together in their letters, suggesting they were always rushing. WEAA even when writing in longhand used symbols for commonly occurring words, for example a line for 'the.' The *Pitman's Journal's* made the same

point on how shorthand facilitated WEAA's industry, 'It is probable that Dr. Axon could not have achieved such a vast literary output but for the assistance of shorthand. Much of his work was written in Phonography, and some of it was put in type direct from the shorthand; he also made use of a phonographic assistant.'[611]

Shorthand was once as important as computer skills are now. In 1859, Bailey was a founder of the Manchester Phonographic Union. This was an important pioneering society, linking the crafts of Isaac Pitman's shorthand with his ideas for phonetic spelling, writing, and printing reform. Ivie Mackie, thrice Mayor of Manchester between 1857-1860, Thomas Bazley, Manchester M.P, and Isaac Pitman were all supportive of the society.

According to *Pitman's Journal*, WEAA mastered shorthand around 1860, and used it for the extensive notes he made when he attended lectures. AFB records that WEAA enrolled as a member of the Phonetic Society Class 2 on 11 January 1869. WEAA typically had both a historical and a promulgating interest in shorthand, simplified spelling, and phonetic systems. Joining Bailey's Phonographic Union and Pitman's Phonetic Society, brought WEAA into contact with new circles of writers and publishers as well as furthering his *N&Q* links with the linguistic scholars Dr. A J Ellis and

Professor Skeat with their interests in early English pronunciation. Presumably women were admitted as members of both societies; they certainly seized the opportunities of shorthand. Bailey met his wife through shorthand. It was a perfect environment for the young WEAA.

Pitman & Sons later published some of WEAA's pamphlets and he was a regular contributor to *Pitman's Journal*, specialising in the history and literature of shorthand. Bailey and WEAA were recognised as very significant people in the shorthand movement and their friendship brought useful advances to the Phonetic Society. WEAA emphasised the role of shorthand in knowledge and education In his paper, *On the Extent of Modern Shorthand Literature*, read before the LA in 1889, 'shorthand had become in our own day a great instrument for the instruction of people.' WEAA's message persuaded many libraries to collect shorthand books and periodicals.

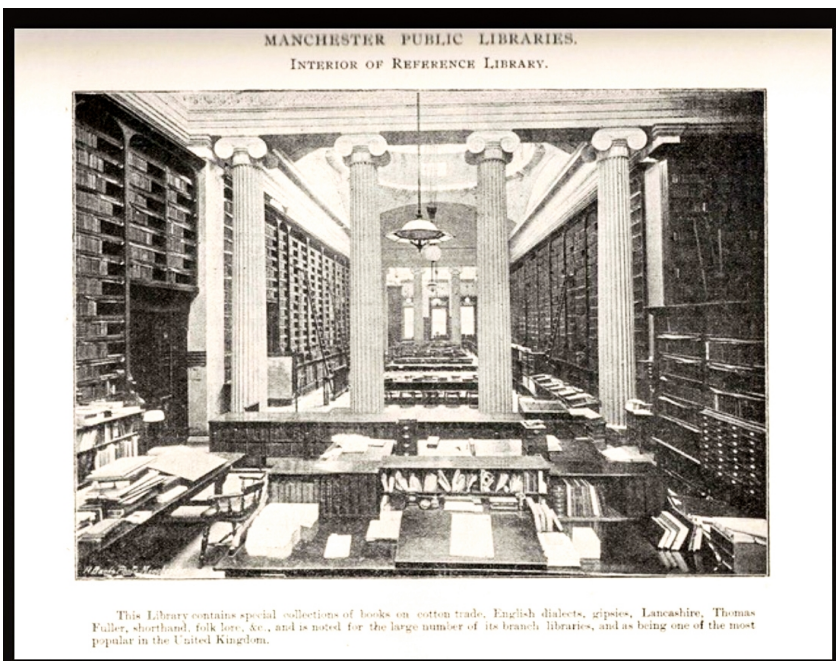
WEAA's paper, *Charles Dickens and Shorthand* was much acclaimed when it was published first in the *Manchester Quarterly* in 1891 and then as a pamphlet in 1892.[612] It was

extensively reviewed in British newspapers. WEAA's account of Dickens using the Gurney system was news to most. WEAA had also scooped information from Charles Dickens' son, H F Dickens, the Recorder of Deal, who remembered a 'stenography relic',[613] the notebook Dickens made 'when he taught me shorthand.'[614] J J H Bange, writing from Groningen, ten years later was anxious to obtain a copy of the paper as it was 'recommended as best.'[615] It is still pertinent given current attempts to crack Dickens' shorthand codes.

Shorthand Collection

Henry Boddington of the brewing family purchased Bailey's famous shorthand collection and donated it to Manchester Free Reference Library. This historic archive enriched the collection already bequeathed by the late John Harland. As the *Pall Mall Gazette* commented, in Bailey's collection 'probably, not less than a thousand volumes will be found, all dealing immediately or remotely with the singularly fascinating, but most atrociously difficult art of short-writing.'[616] In 1891 MCL published a list of the collection and its later additions: I have a copy that must

have been a working list, annotated with notes, red pen markings, and intriguing attachments of shorthand scribbles as well as a letter from Sutton. The collection is a historic treasure.[617]


MANCHESTER PUBLIC LIBRARIES.
INTERIOR OF REFERENCE LIBRARY.
This Library contains special collections of books on cotton trade, English dialects, gipsies, Lancashire, Thomas Fuller, shorthand, folk lore, &c., and is noted for the large number of its branch libraries, and as being one of the most popular in the United Kingdom.

Manchester Reference Library: Old Town Hall, King Street. Special collections of books on Thomas Fuller, Shorthand, Folk-lore, Gypsies, Dialect etc, all linked in various ways to WEAA. From *Views and Memoranda of Public Libraries* by Alfred Cotgreave, 1901

CHAPTER 17

CIVIC PRIDE AND PUBLIC ART

The New Manchester Town Hall

In 1977, the Public Relations Office in Manchester published a facsimile edition of WEAA's *An Architectural and General Description of the Town Hall Manchester.* [618]

This facsimile, a splendid folio in a crimson slip case embellished with the city's coat-of-arms (exceptionally showing the beasts intact), was chosen as a fitting memento for the centenary of the Town Hall, Alfred Waterhouse's Gothic masterpiece.

By the time Manchester was conferred with city status in 1853 it had vastly outgrown the facilities of the old Town Hall on King Street. Abel Heywood campaigned persistently for a new building that was both functional and glorious, a symbol of the city. He had extra clout as Mayor in 1862-63. The Council decided in 1864 to build a new Town Hall on a grand scale. Between 1868 and 1877 the Town Hall took shape, fitting neatly into an awkward triangle of land with its main entrance on Albert Square, facing the ornate Albert Monument that Queen Victoria herself had approved, opened by the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1869.

Yet Queen Victoria refused to open the new Town Hall. The reasons are still debated but probably arose from her abhorrence for the radical Abel Heywood, Mayor again in 1876-77. In true Manchester spirit, the Council then decided that the most fitting person to do the honours was Abel himself. Additionally,

the most massive of the Town Hall bells was named Great Abel. WEAA rushed into print to defend Abel Heywood when the Queen's refusal sparked off scurrilous rumours. His pamphlet, *The Mayor of Manchester and his Slanderers*,[619] was quoted at length in a recent *Guardian* article.[620]

The new Town Hall was indeed a parochial affair with some unhappy that the London based Alfred Waterhouse had won the design competition over the home architect, Thomas Worthington. WEAA was an obvious local choice to write the prestigious architectural guide. Who else could offer his combination of expertise and readability? WEAA had proved he could move well beyond antiquarian boundaries with the articles in *Companion to the British Almanac*, the publication in 1875 of *The Mechanics Friend,* and his involvement with the *British Architect* around this time. He was of course well known to Abel Heywood through politics and through publishing. WEAA's pamphlets had been published by the Heywoods since the 1860s. With WEAA as the author, the architect Thomas Raffles Davison as the illustrator, the book was published in 1878 by Abel Heywood & Son. Raffles

Davison's photolithographic illustrations were printed by the Guardian Printing Works.

An Architectural and General Description of the Town Hall Manchester

WEAA opens very clearly and precisely with 'This volume has two objects.' He defines these as giving 'a full and accurate account of a building' and
recording its dedication to public use, 'symbolising not merely the opulence of the city, but also that great principle of local self-government which has played so great a part in the past, and appears destined to be of still greater importance in the future.'

The first object was splendidly realised. WEAA captured the excitement of this iconic building as well as every single detail that surely could ever be needed. His phrase 'unequalled for size, completeness and adaptability for its purpose among the municipal buildings of Europe' is quoted regularly in histories of Manchester.[621] WEAA modestly wrote in the Preface that Thomas Raffles Davidson's illustrations represented 'the chief value of the work.' They certainly are stunning, revealing the scale and detail as adeptly as WEAA does in the text. One was reprinted in the *British Architect*.[622] Raffles Davidson is still studied as an architectural illustrator but this collaboration with WEAA is oddly overlooked.

The approach WEAA took is so exact it could be turned into virtual reality. He walks with

the reader through each part of the building, the use of ‘we’ and ‘us’ conveying pleasurable sharing. He pauses at each point to elaborate on the statistics, structure, materials, and ideas behind the design. Names of quarries, composition of mortar, ‘a slightly hydraulic Warmsworth lime, and an admixture of ashes with the sand’, are given as well as the names of all involved from the sub-contractors to the subscribers for the city plate, weight ‘upwards of 10,000 ounces’, value £7000 and total pieces seventy-five. The masses of detail somehow do not overwhelm but convert into a vivid exploration. The papers in MCLA show how minutely WEAA corrected the proofs and how carefully he consulted over details.[623] This is a virtuoso performance from WEAA.

Nearly a century and a half later, the Town Hall was closed for a massive renovation program. WEAA’s book again came into its own. The Curatorial Manager Meg McHugh replied to my query on whether it was used by the Transformation Team as follows: ‘We frequently refer to his book and it has been an invaluable source of information about the original construction and appearance of the building. We also regularly refer to Axon’s

original papers which are held at Manchester Archives.'[624] There could not be better endorsement of its worth.

Self-Government
With his second objective, the celebration of local government, WEAA fully recognised the significance of Manchester's independence. The new Town Hall was the culmination of the previous generation's hard-won progress.

Manchester's battles for self-government were realised with the founding of the first Borough Council in 1838. As WEAA's hero Richard Cobden famously said of Peterloo, 'Recollect that the massacre of the 16th of August, 1819, could not have occurred if Manchester had then been incorporated.'[625]
As Frangopulo summarised it, 'These men, who had fought a hard battle for the charter, were moved by a strong sense of public duty towards their less fortunate townsmen and the zeal with which they took up the challenge of their civic responsibility set a standard of municipal achievement which has not since been equalled.'[626] Public services remained firmly in their hands. The Council controlled the Police, Gas, Water, Libraries, and from 1870 the new tramways.

It was a powerful recent history for WEAA. He knew some of the pioneers directly, others by repute or their writing. His own life had

been transformed by Manchester's free libraries as well as by the massive investments in sanitation, health, services, and structures. All this was in his mind when he wrote of the principle of local self-government.

The new Town Hall is now seen largely a symbol of civic grandeur, Manchester's pride in commercial and industrial supremacy embodied in its magnificence. But the speeches at the Banquet, as WEAA recorded them, show there was an awareness then of a more complex significance. To use a phrase of the day, the speeches were not just 'buttering' but an opportunity for considering the future. Splendid as the new Town Hall was, its grandeur did not blind as it perhaps does in the twenty-first century.

Opening

Friday, 13 September 1877, was a day to remember. First the procession and ceremonial opening, darkened by the rain but full of cheering multitudes as WEAA described. Then the Banquet with nearly four hundred guests, all meticulously listed by WEAA as any omissions or mistakes would be embarrassing. Next the reception and ball, with the dancing lasting to half-past four in the morning. Manchester clubbers come from a stalwart ancestry.

WEAA's own gorgeous green, pink, and ruby invitation, the detailed seating plan, and menus are all preserved in MCLA.[627] It is hard to imagine what WEAA could have eaten much of the rich dishes on offer, and of course the punch, sherries, madeiras, and wines would have passed him by.

At the banquet, John Bright praised the independent and active spirit of Mancunians. This was certainly to the fore in the procession on the Saturday morning. The idea for this parade had originated with the trade societies: it must have been an incredible sight. As well as the gargantuan procession banners, the costumes, flowers and rosettes, the societies carried the instruments, products, and symbols of their trades. There were glass swords, giant loaves,

golden frames, models of a steam hammer, a tank, a wagon, a sugar refiner, and a whisky still, and a complete internal set of water fittings. WEAA described them all, listing sixty-four groups and giving short histories of some societies. Thousands were involved and it ended with a firework display at Belle Vue, 'a colossal illumination representing the Albert-square front of the new Town Hall.'

The book finishes with a list of subscribers, featuring Manchester's most distinguished citizens as well as several names from all over the country, firms, and institutions like the Leeds Public Library. There must have been many to purchase the 'small folio, handsomely bound in cloth, gilt edges 12s 6d' as it was advertised as ready for sale on 3 July 1878. [628]

Penny Guide

WEAA was very conscious that expensive and substantial books were beyond many people's pockets and time. He tried wherever possible to provide cheaper and shorter alternatives. He was sharp in re-utilising his texts and in the case of the penny guide he also displayed business acumen.

In 1877 WEAA produced a one penny *Guide to the New Town Hall*, a pamphlet of fourteen pages, including advertisements, cleverly designed to be on sale for the opening on 13 September. The pamphlet gave exact details of what was planned for the ceremonies, very much forming a programme for the event. It was published or rather printed by WEAA's

regular firm of Tubbs and Brook, 11 Market Street. Given the 'vast multitude' who attended on the day a fair number of copies must have sold and brought in a profit.

The penny guide was an offshoot of the prestigious architectural work with close parallels between the two texts. Presumably WEAA created them with the nineteenth century equivalent of cut and paste. There are also several newspaper articles running through 1877 and 1878 that were surely written by WEAA or used text he supplied. Similar phrases, descriptions and information appear in articles on the construction, opening and related ceremonies in the *Manchester Courier*, the *Manchester Times*, the *Manchester Evening News*, and the *Manchester Guardian*. John Heywood reprinted the *Courier* article of 10 September 1877 as a penny pamphlet, *Manchester New Town Hall: General History and Detailed Description of the Building*.

Ford Madox Brown and the Town Hall Murals

The twelve murals that adorn Manchester Town Hall are certainly splendid but still rather puzzle visitors. They are supposed to illustrate the city's history yet the relevance of some of the scenes is rather fuzzy. Ford Madox Brown started the murals in 1879, completing the sequence in 1893 after Frederic Shields withdrew from covering the last six. He endowed the murals with symbolic and satirical elements that place them well beyond simple

reflections of Victorian ideals and thus they continue to intrigue.

The momentous choice of subjects triggered much debate and correspondence in local newspapers. After reading the plan as described in the *Athenaeum*, WEAA wrote to Alderman Heywood on 23 September 1878, querying some aspects.

Joseph Thompson had the thankless task of representing all the ideas and reactions to the Decorations Sub Committee and did not welcome WEAA's letter. He replied to WEAA with some ferocity. WEAA was astonished at the aggression aroused by his polite observations and defended himself stoutly, after taking time to reply, 'I should at once have replied but for Mr. Thompson's assertion that my letter was "more the carping complaint of a literary critic than the fair and generous examination of a subject which a friend who wishes to see the spirit of an event or portrayal rather than its dry and exact detail."'[629]

WEAA praised Ford Madox Brown's 'original and vigorous genius' before debating each point. He summarised it all as follows:

> 'The simple truth is that the list as printed in the Athenaeum contains errors in history, errors in chronology and errors in spelling. To point these out whilst they could be remedied

> seemed to me a duty though a disagreeable one. The wider question involved in the right selection of such subjects, it is no part of my business to discuss.' With a flavour rather reminiscent of duelling, WEAA invited the Committee if not satisfied on the accuracy of the Athenaeum list to call in gentlemen like James Crossley or John Eglington Bailey to decide.

The Committee took WEAA seriously as a recognised expert. On 18 December 1878 they formally responded to all the points he had raised.[630] Ford Madox Brown accepted several of WEAA's modifications and as Walmsley commentated, 'had it not been for Axon's intervention the Town Hall Murals might have depicted some very dubious incidents in Manchester history.'[631]

These entangled debates aside, there is the vexed question of why Peterloo was not included. Joseph Thompson commented brusquely, 'Peterloo is left blank, as this subject gives offence to some.' Peterloo with the attack of the yeomanry had been designed as the last mural but as The *Guardian* lamented had been abandoned 'out of deference to political susceptibilities', thus stopping short of the nineteenth century and not completing 'the nineteen centuries of Manchester history.'[632]

There is a whole series of *Guardian* articles recording the progress of the murals over the years as well as the thoughts of the artist himself. WEAA is the most likely author. The articles are very much in his clear, narrative style, packed with information but easy to comprehend. What makes me even more certain that the journalist is WEAA are the discussions of the puzzling choices of some subjects. The very points WEAA raised as objections are here again but now with a calm acceptance of the artist's purpose. For example WEAA had objected to Edwin as having no part in the history of Manchester, but if he is the *Guardian* journalist here, he has come to terms with it, 'It is a pity that Edwin was not baptised in Manchester instead of in York, but the fact that the overlord of Manchester was baptised at the latter place is, as it happens, the only thread available by which we can connect Manchester with the introduction of Christianity, and must therefore be accepted in default of a better.'[633] The same line is taken over Crabtree's role over the transit of Venus. WEAA had been unsure that he deserved the prominence but again the *Guardian* journalist accepts the choice with a slight comment that

was ‘not a very successful’ observer of the transit of Venus.

There is appreciation throughout the articles of both the technical challenges and solutions, and of the power of Ford Madox Brown’s painting. The articles sound as if they come from intimate conversations and viewings: the AP letters show WEAA was often invited by Ford Madox Brown to view progress and discuss technicalities.

Ford Madox Brown and his family moved to Manchester whilst he was engaged on the first eight murals; the rest were completed on canvas in London, the last in the year Ford Madox Brown died. The great-hearted Ford Madox Brown and WEAA became friends, drawn together by art, history, and radical politics. During the city’s chronic unemployment of 1885-1887, Ford Madox Brown set up labour exchanges for workmen, publicised by C P Scott.

Ford Madox Brown gave WEAA a standing invitation to his homes, first Calais Cottage in Crumpsall and then his handsome Gothic house in Victoria Park. Judging by the handful of AP letters Ford Madox Brown was in the habit of consulting with WEAA, discussing the historic and technical details of the murals with him, including comments on the Gambier Parry process of spirit fresco. He had great faith that WEAA could assist in such matters as borrowing the telescope that belonged to the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. WEAA lent him archaeological pamphlets and found information for him, such as Thomas Fuller’s writing about the Flemish weavers. He often invited WEAA to view his progress on the murals before the Council Committee had a look.

It appears that WEAA had given him the idea for the final mural. Reluctant to paint Bonnie Prince Charlie as he ‘had absolutely nothing in common with the rise of prosperity in Manchester,’ in 1886 Ford Madox Brown proposed instead a scene from John Dalton’s

life, ‘Your remarks on the founder of the atomic theory, however, had made a deep impression on one, & it is but fair that you should know that I am now just designing for panel No. 12 the subject of Dalton collecting marsh-fire gas from a stagnant pond.’[634] The Decorations Sub Committee accepted the change. Ford Madox Brown confessed to WEAA that he had sympathised with views raised in the newspapers on the chosen subjects but feared the whole project would be dropped if the Council met with too much trouble. Already used to consulting WEAA over historical details, he confided in him as a trusted friend.

Ford Madox Brown read WEAA’s articles in *the Guardian* and attended his talks. He was particularly pleased at the *Guardian* account of WEAA’s talk to the Scientific Students Association, on the very day there had been a transit of Venus. WEAA discussed the lives and roles of Jeremiah Horrox and William Crabtree, giving a nicely balanced account of their relationship and their respective recording of the transit of Venus on 24 November 1639. WEAA finished by pointing out that Crabtree would at last be

commemorated by the panel 'Mr. Ford Madox Brown is now painting in the Town Hall of Manchester.' WEAA had argued with Thompson about the role Crabtree played but was clearly able to be gracious.[635] There is no proof, but I wonder whether WEAA helped Ford Madox Brown with some of the historical descriptions he produced for the murals, written as he developed the designs. The notes are very much in WEAA's careful style, the details drawn in by a narrative, clear but packed with information. WEAA was generous in his help and quite conceivably would not have wanted to claim credit. One friend remembered how his curiosity and the calls others made on him meant he never concentrated on a single task; 'he cared nothing for money and fame,' and 'his unselfishness was complete.'[636] Other members of MLC also took great interest in the progress of the murals, being invited to informal viewings, and there would have been no shortage of willing local historians.

The booklet, *Mural Paintings in the Large Hall Town Hall Manchester*, introduces the notes with a rather odd sentence, 'The following words are those Ford Madox Brown chose to

describe his mural paintings in the large hall.'[637] Why not just 'wrote'? Did he choose WEAA's words?

Pedantic Historian

In 2022 a much needed critical study of Ford Madox Brown's murals was published, for the first time making sense of the complexities of the murals' themes and structures. The author, Colin Trodd, considers WEAA's role, seeing him very much as a 'pedantic historian', with a limited view of history and an insistence on being an authority on Manchester. Ford Madox Brown, always scathing about supposed enemies, called WEAA a "little demon' in a letter to Frederic Shields.[638]

Colin Trodd is like Joseph Thompson of the Decorations Sub Committee in his irritation at WEAA's strictures, suggestions, and his prosaic querying of the broadening of history in the plan: both found WEAA's correction of the spelling of Chetham's a particular irritant.

There are justifications for the badgered Ford Madox Brown despairing of all the carping reactions he encountered, including WEAA's. WEAA, always sensitive to the neglect of industrial history, was keen that the murals should acknowledge how Manchester was transformed by canals and railways. He and others advocated the Bridgewater Canal being

included and this was pushed through. A couple of notes from A G Waterhouse (presumably the architect Alfred Waterhouse}, and Joseph Thompson in the Town Hall papers indicate that Ford Madox Brown 'did not take kindly to the pack horses of the Bridgewater Canal,' and delaying tackling it. [639]

My interpretation would be that whatever the annoyance WEAA initially caused the hard pressed Ford Madox Brown, they reached understanding and developed an easy relationship. There is no doubt that WEAA wholeheartedly admired the completed sequence of murals.

Art Circles
WEAA appeared in several art circles. He gave talks, wrote papers, selected illustrators, ran campaigns for public access, initiated exhibitions, befriended individual artists and was prominent in the MLC with all its art related interests.

Although largely overshadowed by his literary, antiquarian, and reform concerns, the AP correspondence does cast some light on WEAA's extensive networking on the arts scene. He had close friendships with several artists who responded gratefully to his intelligent appreciation. There is a clue to WEAA's connection with the artist and suffragette Susan Isabel Dacre in the card inviting him to a viewing of her portrait of Sir Thomas Baker.[640] WEAA was attracted by

graphic art, by illustrators like Charles Rowley and Raffles Davidson and there are discussions related to different projects.

But what of his own skills? There is fortunately some evidence in the *Biograph and Review* article that WEAA did at least sketch, ‘Mr. Axon, in his early youth, showed unusual fondness for literature and art, became an omnivorous reader, and acquired some skill in the use of the pencil as well as the pen.’[641] Edward Schwabe as Hon. Secretary of the Limners Club informed WEAA that he had been elected as an honorary member.[642] Although it only existed from 1877 to 1884 when it was absorbed by the Manchester Arts Club, the Limners was the first arts club in Manchester, half the members being professional artists and half amateurs. One newspaper gave the Limners the edge over the better known and still surviving Manchester Graphics Club, ‘The Limner's Club is an association of artists and amateurs, and as it includes as many of-the one class as the other, its exhibition may lay claim to higher merit than that of the Graphic Club. The collection, which is hung on the walls of its new premises in Ridgefield, is not a large one; but its

excellent counterbalances its modest proportions.'[643] WEAA's talents must have been considerable to be paid the complement of honorary membership.

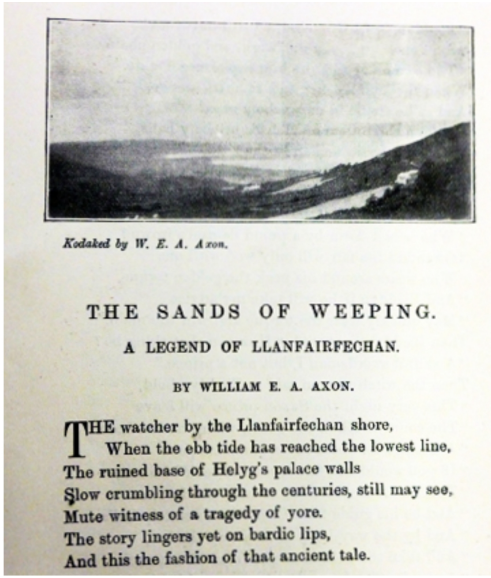
Photography

WEAA was drawn to photography, probably inspired by Casartelli's father, Joseph, an eminent instrument-maker, member of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, and an early photographer. Joseph Casartelli befriended the young WEAA. Later, there are mentions in AP of WEAA's 'kodaking.' WEAA learnt too from his St. Leonards friend, Henry Godbold. As a professional photographer Godbold made his living from standard portraits, but he also skilfully captured wilder scenes such as storm waves crashing on the sea front. A reprint of WEAA's poem *Sands of Weeping* has a note that the illustration was 'Kodaked by W.E.A. Axon.'[644] The publisher, William Andrews, agreeing with WEAA that he was 'tired of reproducing from blocks,' was happy to be guided by WEAA in the matter of a frontispiece photograph.[645] The book in question was probably *Historic Byways and Highways of Old England* although it ended up without a frontispiece.[646]

WEAA contributed notes on photography to *N&Q*, as well as an article in the *Field Naturalist*, under his Dudley Armytage persona, *Who took the first photographic portrait?*[647] There is a bold and unexpected observation on photography in WEAA's scholarly discussion of Alexander Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, '"Sir Plume, of amber snuffbox justly vain/And nice conduct of a clouted cane," was not pleased with his portrait. Some people quarrel even with photographs.'[648] He also pursued this theme in response to George Milner's flattering speech at the 1888 MLC Christmas dinner held in WEAA's honour:

> 'Another thought also occurred to me whilst Mr. Milner was sketching a portrait I did not recognise. Photographers know, that in making the faithful portraits which we present to our appreciating and admiring friends, there is such a thing as touching up the negatives – a process by which the vacuous and inane grin becomes a smile that hints of wit and humour – a method by which the wrinkles are smoothed out, the good points exaggerated, and the bad ones carefully improved, or dropped out of sight.'[649]

He even included a short poem, *The Photographic Art*, in *The Ancoats Skylark* collection.[650]



Kodaked by W. E. A. Axon.

THE SANDS OF WEEPING.

A LEGEND OF LLANFAIRFECHAN.

BY WILLIAM E. A. AXON.

THE watcher by the Llanfairfechan shore,
When the ebb tide has reached the lowest line,
The ruined base of Helyg's palace walls
Slow crumbling through the centuries, still may see,
Mute witness of a tragedy of yore.
The story lingers yet on bardic lips,
And this the fashion of that ancient tale.

Ancoats Art Museum

And of course, he was concerned that art should be accessible. WEAA was ardently engaged with anything that could bring art to working people, enabling opportunities for pleasure, learning, and acquiring skills. As well as his campaigning with the Manchester and Salford Sunday Society, he was involved in Thomas Horsfall's Ancoats Art Museum, also known confusingly as the Manchester Arts Museum. Horsfall was a member of MLC, a Ruskin disciple, a muscular Christian, and a supporter of the Settlement Movement. He started the Ancoats Art Museum in 1877 and in 1886, after some conflict, the collections moved from Queens Park Museum into Ancoats Hall, being absorbed in the 1950s into Manchester Art Gallery. There is now a great deal of interest in the early history of the Ancoats Art Museum.

WEAA was a tutor at the Ancoats Art Museum Saturday afternoon sessions. Given how little

free time he had, it is remarkable that WEAA was prepared to commit to this. But what was he teaching? Photography, sketching or art history? He took an interest in the children's classes, sending oranges when he could not attend their Easter party in 1900.[651]

WEAA was also involved in the Queens Park Museum and Art Gallery, now used as conservation studios by Manchester Art Gallery. WEAA may have instigated the move of a mysterious collection of phrenological heads, originally held at Campfield Library to Queens Park. Their disappearance after that, one of the mysteries of the museum world, has now happily been solved.[652] The statue of Ben Brierley, sculpted by John Cassidy, that stood outside the Queens Park Museum was finally destroyed in the 1980s. Like the Rochdale dialect monument near the Touchstones Art Gallery, these were fond tributes to public culture.

Art and MLC

The MLC, as mentioned previously, was one of the three societies likely to have been most significant to WEAA. Founded in 1862, the MLC really developed from 1865 onwards, as evidenced by printed minutes, publications,

and their journal, *Manchester Quarterly*. WEAA joined in 1874 and soon made an impact as an enthusiastic and invigorating new member. His role and 'voluminous toil' in the change from the 'barrenness and unattractiveness' of the first short reports to the 'handsome, well bound, and beautifully printed' publications was highlighted by the *Salford Chronicle*.[653]

WEAA was secretary from 1875 to January 1879 and it is no coincidence that in this period the MLC became active in the debates about art provision in Manchester. This was summed up neatly in the *Manchester Faces and Places* entry for WEAA, and his role was emphasised, 'For five years Mr. Axon acted as honorary secretary of the Manchester Literary Club, during which time the members' roll was doubled, and the club itself became a powerful instrument for the formation of public opinion in matters relating to literature and art.'[654]

The MLC had strong links with the art world, many members being professional artists from the graphic illustrator W Robinson through to WEAA's friends, Frederic Shields, and the art dealer, councillor, and activist Charles

Rowley. Ford Madox Brown invited members to view the progress of his murals and in 1883 William Morris addressed the club on *Art, Wealth, and Riches*, greatly annoying at least one listener, 'This lecture was a great disappointment to me, for it gave me the impression that Mr Morris thinks himself the only one who knows anything about architecture, or house furnishing.'[655]

According to the MLC reports, there were many debates around the theme of art and literature, especially in the period leading up to the establishment of Manchester Art Gallery in 1882. The MLC and the Manchester Academy of Art ran joint conversaziones and exhibitions at the Royal Institution, the over-crowding sometimes a cause of friction. Only members could attend but with the huge concession of 'each member being allowed to take two ladies.'[656]

WEAA was drawn to graphic art. Artistic friends like Charles Rowley included the occasional scribbles with their letters, knowing they would delight him. As an editor he was used to commissioning and selecting designs. Reflecting these interests, he instigated the

MLC's Black and White Exhibition that ran on 24 to 26 November 1875, preceded by the inevitable Conversazione at the Clarence Hotel. As well as being a prime mover, WEA wrote and delivered a long verse prologue for the occasion.[657] The success of the exhibition inspired a more extensive one at the Royal Institution in 1877. WEAA contributed photographs of sculptures.

In 1880 there was intense interest in the debate at MLC, 'Manchester as an Art Centre.' The issues centred on the moribund Royal Institution, and the need for the city to establish, as Alfred Darbyshire, architect, theatre designer and occasional actor, proposed, 'three things - an educational school of art, a Manchester Academy of fine arts, and a civic art gallery.' The first was already in progress, the second flourishing and the third, supposedly provided by the Royal Institution was, as Charles Rowley added, in a 'state of torpor.' [658] Manchester's complex ambitions and conflicts in the Victorian art scene have been brilliantly captured by Susan W Thomson, her book inspired by Charles Rowley's words, 'So Mr. Shields will remain unrecognised except by those who seek him

out.' [659]Several of the unrecognised artists she describes were amongst WEAA's friends and acquaintances.

In 1882 the Royal Institution transferred its buildings and collections to the city, forming the Manchester Art Gallery. WEAA was a participant in this development through MLC, and although not a major figure, he remained influential. Decades later he tried to persuade Walter Butterworth, Chair of the Art Gallery, to give Samuel Lawson Booth an exhibition.

IOGT Exhibition
In 1886 a William Whatmough, President of the IOGT Littleborough Branch, proposed clearing part of a debt owing on their premises with an art exhibition in Easter Week. He had ambitious plans. The Temperance Hall would hold 1000 people, they might borrow a Crossley Otto Gas Engine to run a printing press, producing thousands of handbills, a huge oil painting might be the central attraction, or an electric light placed at the very top of the high building. There might be live glass blowing with the creations being sold on the spot. Excursion trains coming to Hollingworth Lake near Rochdale could be met, capturing visitors from both Lancashire and Yorkshire.

He appealed to Brother Axon for help. WEAA went to a great deal of trouble to borrow paintings, activating his networks of rich contacts, including the MP Benjamin Armitage who politely refused, 'If you are angry with me I will show cause when next I have the pleasure to meet you.'[660] He approached artists and collectors across the country and sorted out the tedious business of delivery. Whatmough could not believe his luck, 'I cannot express my gratitude to you for the

very magnanimous way in which you have interested yourself in our proposed Exhibition. The very generous offers of friends from various places of models, curiosities, pictures etc. have inspired an amount of confidence I could not have expected.'[661] Whatmough gave WEAA top billing on the handbill.

It all looked exciting but unfortunately, the exhibition was a total failure as regards clearing the IOGT debt. Whatmough apologised for delaying writing to WEAA but as he expressed it, 'I have had no heart to write any where or any way. Our Exhibition has been financially a thorough failure. So much so, it has cut the heart out of us all.'[662]

Interestingly Whatmough had no doubts on how good the exhibition was and the few who turned up were indeed full of praise. The problem seems to have been the charges; even when prices were lowered people were not willing or able to pay. Pulling the strands of poor Whatmough's project together from the handful of AP letters is a valuable exercise. There cannot be many inside accounts of such localised attempts of art exhibitions and Whatmough's sad experience reinforced the realisation that art should be free.

WEAA's Perspective

Art ran throughout WEAA's life, mirrored by his campaigns, exhibitions, and the articles he produced over the years. His first significant paper was *Art in Lancashire,* published in the

MLC's *Manchester Quarterly* in 1884, and of course reprinted by WEAA as a pamphlet. His appreciation both of aesthetics and techniques, his expert knowledge of arts clubs and societies, are strikingly apparent in the memorial he wrote for the artist and illustrator John Dawson Watson. Typically, WEAA also noted something not generally known. There was a proposal, supported by many, that Watson should be responsible for the Town Hall Murals, in charge of other artists.[663]

In his last years WEAA published notable studies of Frederic Shields, George Frederick Watts, and Holman Hunt. Art must have provided a further link in his friendship with Meta Gaskell, a keen amateur artist, and friend herself of Holman Hunt, Rossetti, and Ruskin. Yet however appreciative he was of the artist's mastery of subjects, WEAA ultimately looked for poetry in art, for the power it had to raise people to "aspirations for righteousness and truth.'[664] Colin Trodd rightly placed WEAA, Abel Heywood and Thomas Horsfall together in their design, "to make Manchester a distinctive metropolitan centre for science, literature and the arts, a place of social collaboration and mutual aid.' [665]

For WEAA, art represented more than municipal glories. Art, like knowledge was there to be shared, and the artist like the writer had a responsibility to inspire, instruct and delight, to enhance hard lives with the light of poetic truth. He had the innate sympathy, whatever his own limitations, to try and grasp the visions and realisations of the different artists he admired. In his article on George Frederick Watts, he contrasted narrow views of art as ‘an ornamental fringe on the garment of life’, with the Prophet as Artist, as he saw Watts, ‘proclaiming to man the beauty of creation, calling them to repentance and righteousness, and teaching them in parables, lessons of pity, endurance, hope, and far-reaching, all-comprehending love.’[666] WEAA’s interpretation is a brave attempt to relate to an artist who still continues to challenge.

CHAPTER 18

MOVING TO EDEN

The In-Laws

To return to WEAA's family life. By the end of 1873 WEAA, Jane and their three children, Sophie aged six, Ernest aged five and Katherine Janet Armytage, born on 2 December 1872, were alone at 4 Victoria Street, Rusholme.

Their daughter Lucy had died in September 1871, Jane's mother Sarah in September 1873, and her sister Mary Lucy had married. Her problematic father, John Woods, had remarried and departed.

WEAA's employment at Campfield had hitherto dictated where the family could live. Being within easy commuting distance of work was less of a necessity with the Antilles post and the income from *LNQ*. The family were free to move from city streets to the countryside.

Bank Cottage

Progressing upwards in residential terms, the Axons moved, possibly first to Ashton- under-Lyne where both Jane's sisters lived, and then in 1876 to Bank Cottage, Patricroft, Barton-upon-Irwell. When the Axons lived there Barton-upon-Irwell was still an ancient township, a centre of cotton manufacture, surrounded by agricultural lands. It was renowned for the aqueduct carrying the Bridgewater Canal over the Irwell, replaced in 1894 by the unique swing aqueduct over the Manchester Ship Canal.

Patricroft was a district within the Barton township, near the canal and river, four and a

half miles from Manchester. The railway station opened in 1830, serving the first purpose built passenger railway in the world, the famous Liverpool to Manchester line. Conveniently, given WEAA's extensive correspondence, Patricroft had a post-office. It also had in the early 1870s 'a recently constructed iron church, a British school, a cotton mill, a quilting factory, silk-throwing and weaving mills, machine works, an iron-foundry and many private residences.'[667]

The extensive iron-foundry was built by James Nasmyth, the ironmaster and inventor of the steam hammer: he selected the site as a healthier location for his workers. An additional attraction, according to his memoirs, were the local metal working skills, the inheritance of Norman armourers.

WEAA had brought his family to a pretty place, despite being on the doorstep of the foundry, an estate of workers' houses, and the railway. A modern resident described Patricroft to me as an island, surrounded by canals, rivers, streams, and mosses.

WEAA's curiosity encompassed both industrial and rural Patricroft. He wrote a well-informed technical essay, *Robert Wilson and the Invention of the Steam Hammer*,[668] covering the various roles of James Watt, William Deverell, James Nasmyth, and his partner Robert Wilson.

WEAA's friend, John Bone, appreciated the family's joy at being transported from city

streets to the countryside, ‘My kind remembrances to Mrs. Axon. May you and she be happy in your Eden!’.[669]

The One-Legged Robin
Katharine Janet Armytage was known as Kitty by the family. She made an early appearance in print.

WEAA’s unusually personal paper *The One-Legged Robin*[670] was published under the name of ‘A Manchester Pythagorean’ in *Ben Brierley’s Journal*,[671] and circulated as a pamphlet amongst friends, preserving his privacy. WEAA used this pseudonym on other occasions too. The pseudonym relates to the reverence with which Pythagoras was regarded by Victorian vegetarians: WEAA also drawn to Platonism, derived in part from Pythagoras. WEAA generally limited the use of this pseudonym to articles on science, technology, or natural history. He appeared under this name in *Ben Brierley’s Journal* with articles such as the life of the artisan mathematician, *Jack o’Bens*, *A Barometer Born not Made*, and *Why the Sea is Salt*.

WEAA was particularly fond of birds, their habits, folklore, and literary associations. Birds held poetic significance for him, later finding expression in his poem *The Ancoats Skylark*. The one-legged robin had found its way to Bank Cottage and the family fed the damaged bird, 'he has certainly seen something of the seamy side of the world, and has been badly hit in the battle for life. His topping has lost some of its pristine brilliance, and, oddest of all, he has only one leg.' On Valentine's Day, Miss Kitty, aged five, received a letter, 'My dear Kitty,- I am a little one-legged robin, and am very glad of the bread you let me have in your garden. Though the thrush on the tree may sing to you more loudly, I am still your little pet valentine. "ROBIN REDBREAST."'[672]

Rosie

Evelyn Rose Armytage Axon, known as Rosie to the family, was born at Bank Cottage on 2 March 1877. She appears to have been

frail throughout her life, dying in New Zealand on 3 May 1906.

Fern Bank
The Axons left Bank Cottage in 1879, a decade before the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal transformed the area. Their next stop was 1 Fern Bank, Bowker Street, Higher Broughton, an even more desirable residential district, conveniently only just over a mile from Manchester but free from the city's pollution of dense housing and heavy industry.

The wealthy middle classes had chosen Higher Broughton for their villas as early as the 1830s, objecting in 1844 to the incorporation into Salford, and the association with 'the filth of Salford or the cotton of Manchester.'[673] James Joule escaped there in the 1868, seeking a healthier location for his family. Higher Broughton was also the next step for prosperous Jewish families, moving northwards from the increasingly populated Cheetham Hill to the spacious suburbs beyond. Bowker Street is still there and although most of the houses are modern a few terraced and semi-detached houses survive. These are well built with small front gardens.

Felicia
There is a pencil note on the Galton form in AFB 'Children in Order of Birth' that Jane had a stillborn daughter between the births of Rosie and Felicia. Felicia was born at Fern Bank on 11 August 1881 but only lived for eight hours.

WEAA rushed to announce the birth in the

Guardian, and the notice appeared on 13 August when Felicia was already dead. Despite his grief, he still managed to act as chair and distribute prizes at the cottagers' flower-show held on 13 August at St. Michael's Schoolroom in Hulme, an enterprise he had instigated, and encouraged. He could not let them down. The *Guardian* gave a full report.[674] A boy of seven won the prize for a bouquet of wildflowers. WEAA spoke of the need to bring nature into the urban existence, 'It was desirable as far as possible to bring the influences of love and study of nature into the crowded streets of such populous districts. The love of flowers opened out a new world of wonder and beauty.'

The Boy Next Door

In 1882 Sophie and her future husband Joe met for the first time. Mrs Haddow and her three children, Nellie, Emily, and Joe, moved in next door at 3 Fern Bank. Joe Haddow described Sophie as around fourteen, and himself five and a half months older. Joe witnessed, as described in his memoir *We Two,* the lively and loving Axon household. His own father, a remote and disturbing figure, had separated from the family.

Joe left a brief description of 1 and 3 Fern Bank: ‘The two houses occupied by our parents were what were called semi-detached dwellings, dwellings in which were often found educated middle-class people with something less of the world’s goods than their mental and moral worth might have warranted.’ [675]

He observed the area’s mix of open countryside and pollution, expressing anger at the greed for profits that desecrated beauty. The Irwell was part of the landscape for the Axon children as they wandered through Higher Broughton. It loops through Manchester and Salford’s history as well, the dark river as Cyril Bracegirdle called it, contending that, ‘The modern world as we know it was born along the banks of the River Irwell in south-east Lancashire. It is a short river, a mere forty miles in length; a stream by continental standards, but its waters were used to power the looms of the first cotton mills.’[676]

Murray Street

Rosie’s fragility, the stillborn daughter, and Felicia’s death signalled Jane’s declining health. In 1884, the family moved to 66 Murray Street, still within Higher Broughton. Their house looked out on the green surrounding St John the Evangelist: the magnificent church

was designed by the eminent Manchester architect Richard Lane with stained glass windows by Pugin. It is now an abandoned, though listed, building. Murray Street was close to the prestigious Cliff residential area, the high ground overlooking the Irwell and Castle Irwell, once the Manchester racecourse.

WEAA's Debatable Land

Once the Axons moved beyond Manchester city centre to Patricroft, and then to Higher Broughton, they had new layers of history to explore, a landscape that held fields, orchards, ancient houses as well as the factories, mills, and canals. All this fed into WEAA's writing.

WEAA wrote more personally than usual on the impact of leaving the city for the countryside or at least for the edge of the countryside. In *The One-Legged Robin*, he confronted the dilemma of escaping the city, abandoning 'the poorest class to welter in this desert' but justified the selfishness on the grounds that those who have grown up under 'leaden skies' want their children 'to look upon the sweet heaven, and to hear the warbling of songbirds.' He describes living in 'a debatable land between the country and the town, in a district which combines farms, furnaces and factories, and yet has its own characteristics.'

The family explored the Barton aqueduct and canal, 'the mighty monument of Brindley's genius', the 'lordly domain of Worsley', the famous skull house of Wardley and the Old Hall of Barton, 'the ancient home of the family that gave birth to Barton Booth.' Here is the antiquarian speaking but then WEAA turns to the impact of nature:

> ‘We can see trees that are not poisoned by noxious vapours; flowers that have not been grown in glass cases, and a sky, which whether cloudy or serene, is not entirely shut out from sight by the intervening smoke. Our short rambles, our tiny gardening experiences, yield us all the more pleasure because we are city bred. The little things of nature give us delights unknown to our country cousins, with whom familiarity has, in some measure, bred contempt.’[677]

WEAA was no distant figure but an affectionate young husband and father, enjoying pleasurable family expeditions into the countryside. The children variously took up the same causes of temperance and vegetarianism, including roles within IOGT and VS. Unlike the children of many fervent parents, they seem to have been free to change their minds and habits. Sophie, Ernest, and Kitty were drawn into his research, writing, and public activities. He encouraged them to write and publish just as he did, whether articles in journals, contributions to newspapers or in Kitty’s case, creative story telling. Sophie had a talent for indexing.

Forster’s Education Act of 1870 set the framework for public education for children but in the early days there were significant limitations and gaps in its provision. The Axon children were fortunate to be brought up in a home full of books and learning, with adult conversations and exciting visitors to add to the rich mix. Jane and WEAA introduced them to art, literature and music, and the older sisters taught young Rosie. The circle of distinguished guests and visitors expanded their horizons further. Professor John E B Mayor of Cambridge whilst staying with the Axons, aroused Kitty’s interest in German poetry.

WEAA and Jane also sought to provide them with formal education

albeit in a piecemeal fashion. There are mentions of local dame schools, home tutoring, boarding school briefly for Ernest, as well as attendance at the new state schools. Their old friend, Mathilde Hompes, was employed to teach the girls German, and she continued as Sophie's tutor for several years. Sophie was described as scholar on the 1881 census which indicates she was being educated but not necessarily at school. Ernest on his own admission had little talent for languages. Miss Hompes tutored Joe in German: he briefly had ambitions to be a commercial correspondent.

The Axon Household as viewed by Joe Haddow

Decades later in New Zealand, Joe reflected on the days when he and Sophie were young, surrounded by the warmth of the Axon family. Joe's recollections of their childhood adventures, their courtship, their first married years together, and then their life in New Zealand are extremely moving. *We Two* unfolds a remarkable love story.

It is a shock to read of Joe and Sophie's idyllic childhood days and then to realise that Joe was working full time from the age of twelve. His few weeks as a pupil teacher ended when he became 'general slave to a painter's staff of joinery men', a brutal experience that he endured to support his 'struggling deserted mother.' Next, he became a library assistant at the Mechanics Institute, then moved into a lawyer's office as a clerk, prevented by lack of money from ever being chartered, a source of great bitterness to him. In New Zealand he not only qualified as a solicitor but set up his own practice with his son Ughtred.

Jane's debility, that later proved to be consumption, meant that Sophie when she went into long frocks at fifteen assumed her mother's duties, helping WEAA and attending functions with him, 'Her mind was developed beyond her years; she had read much more than the average educated girl, she was most anxious to do all she could to help her father, and though she did not greatly enjoy the functions she attended she performed the duty gracefully and

willingly.' She dealt with much of the letter writing and took over as housekeeper. Even before then, when Joe first saw her, she was helping the maid, Betsy, to sweep the front doorstep.

Sophie and Joe's companionable adventures were limited to a few precious hours on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. Joe harshly describes his weary struggles to advance himself at evening classes when exhausted from long hours as a legal clerk in a dark office with no outlet to the air and a fish tail gas jet burning summer and winter. Joe gives an unsentimental picture of bleak Manchester, 'made dreary and most unspeakably ugly by factory refuse, factory chimneys and factory smoke,' a city he detested for its smothering pollution and brutal shortening of lives.

There was little constraint in the Axon household. Jane's two sisters had several children so there was no lack of cousins close in age to the Axon children. The four Axon children, their cousins, and the three Haddow children played marbles and rounders together. Joe's partiality for helping Sophie in these games was understood by all. Sophie and Joe had memorable excursions together. There was a legendary episode where they freed Sophie's pet rabbit to become the terror of the indigenous bunnies on the riverbanks at Agecroft.

Sophie and Joe read whatever they wanted in a household of books, sharing *Boy's Own* stories and then the later *Girls' Own* stories, agreeing that *Boys Own* was better. As might be expected Sophie learnt much of literature and literary figures: Joe specifically mentions Bunyan, Chatterton, and Cowper in her reading. An interesting selection for self-educated scholars like WEAA tended to immerse themselves in such past authors, if only for the practical reason that their books would surface cheaply at the second-hand

bookstalls. Joe commented, 'Her Father has an extraordinary knowledge of books and a substantial library, and his children were put in the way of good literature and encouraged to study it.' Sophie earnestly read through the whole of a large encyclopaedia of English literature at the age of fourteen. Her knowledge never left her for as Joe wrote, 'Fifty years after I heard her son-in-law say that he had never asked her a question in the realm of literature which she was not able to answer.' Her skill at spelling was another attraction for the smitten Joe. Sophie was always in charge, dictating her commands to her willing worshipper, and this held good all their lives. Joe, alienated from his own brutal and miserly father, was entranced by the gentleness of the uxorious WEAA, happily letting his family boss him around. Ernest also commented that his mother 'saw to the spending.'

Joe mentions the old retriever dog that the Axon family adopted when it was abandoned 'by a forgetful acquaintance' and that WEAA 'was a man with a kind heart, but with no use whatsoever for a dog of any kind, any protests he was likely to make would be too mild to be

effective, and so the unnecessary dog found a protector.' Joe would not have known the first family dog, Jackson. Later there was another dog, Romp. Despite Joe's comment, WEAA's affection and respect for dogs is certainly apparent in a long newspaper article on Manchester dogs. As well as capturing the elusive history of the Manchester terrier, he ended with an appreciation of a shepherd dog that 'shares with man his noblest attributes—fidelity, courage, and self-sacrifice.'[678] This has to be a dog lover talking. There was a very appreciative response from a Mrs. W. Bently Capper, secretary of the Manchester National Canine Defence League, expressing thanks on behalf of dog-lovers for 'the interesting and informing article.'[679] WEAA's coverage gave her the opportunity to highlight the terrible suffering of many dogs, especially through vivisection. WEAA later joined in the Anti-Vivisection campaign.

Joe's mother died when he was sixteen and he and his sisters moved to their father's house at 23 Boston Street, Hulme, three miles away by Joe's reckoning, on the other side of the city. Nellie married at an early age and may have already left for Bristol. Despite the distance Joe was a regular visitor to the Axons at Murray Street. When Sophie went into town on secretarial missions for WEAA they would meet up at the vegetarian restaurant in Fountain Street, one of WEAA's pet projects. Joe did not share the Axons' principles, but the vegetarian restaurant was cheap. This was

a main concern for Joe trapped in a position as a legal clerk with no prospects and only on a tiny wage, 'the price of a lunch there suited the very moderate capacity of my purse.'

The History of David Grieve

Mrs Humphry Ward wrote one Manchester novel, *The History of David Grieve*.[680] Unlike the works of Mancunians like Mrs Gaskell or Mrs Banks this tends to be overlooked. But she undoubtably modelled the Fruit and Flowers Parlour and the characters who frequented it on the Fountain Street vegetarian restaurant. The hero, desperate to set himself up in the book trade, turns to a vegetarian diet as the only means to save funds from his starvation wages, '"The odd thing about vegetarianism is that you come not to care a rap what you eat. Your taste goes somehow. So long as you're nourished and can do your work, that's all you want."' David Grieve's angry struggles in Manchester mirror the torments Joe experienced.

The menus, reading matter, conversations, and debates of the Fruit and Flowers Parlour are familiar territory for anyone who has read WEAA's correspondence, his food reform papers, or the pages of the *VM*. The details of the Manchester book-trade, the local printing of pamphlets, the descriptions of Chetham's,

Hanging Ditch, and the Cathedral, all suggest that Mrs Ward encountered WEAA, adapting him and his circle as copy. There are deliberate anomalies in the novel that jar on the historian, such as the Hall of Science still being there in the 1870s, but like *New Grub Street* the novel vividly conjures up WEAA's world. Her brother, William Thomas Arnold, was WEAA's close colleague at the *Guardian*, and may well have introduced them to each other. Mrs Humphrey Ward's son contacted Ernest after WEAA's death, a further indication that they had been acquainted.

CHAPTER 19

THE CHILDREN GROWING UP

Joe and Sophie's Courtship

Joe's *We Two* records both the hardships and the happy times of the Axon family. WEAA and Jane emerge as loving parents, generous in their acceptance of the romance between the young Joe and Sophie. There is gaiety, fun and adventure as well as learning in this family.

Joe was Ernest's close friend, one of a lively group of young people who grasped at the freedom of the hills after long days of work in smoky Manchester. They shared walks into the country and expeditions to the blue Derbyshire hills. Joe described their open-air jaunts, the picnics with their regular friends, the three Porter girls, Berta, Lillie, and Annie. Trains enabled day excursions to beauty spots like Bowdon, Rostherne, and Knutsford, places where they dreamt of living someday.

Sophie, like WEAA, suffered occasional weakness. In the spring 1886 she stayed with a family friend Miss Beatrice Lindsay in her rooms at Onchan in the Isle of Man. Miss Lindsay was a Girton College scholar, a mathematician who as a woman could not be awarded a full degree at Girton, an absurdity that lasted until 1947. Later the same year, the little group of Sophie, Kitty, her friend Flo, Ernest, and Joe, holidayed in the Isle of Man, staying with Miss Lindsay.

The names of older family friends feature in *We Two.* Mathilde Hompes and her very close

friend Miss Lord. They kept house together, and the Axons easily referred to them as 'the Hompes.'

Joe quotes two letters written by Sophie on 5 and 20 May 1886 to her father when he was away in London, accompanied by Jane. These letters neatly encapsulate much of the business of WEAA's life with mention of books sold to the bookseller Sutton, issues of periodicals and newspapers that Sophie wants to know whether to forward, items that have arrived via book post, letters that need replies, proofs, copies of pictures, and WEAA's publications. One of Sophie's letters starts 'Here with I send you all that has come. Three copies have come of the Shelley paper, from two different people: I send the wrappers so that you may know where they are from.' The other letter ends '…Ogden would get the money from him, I should call tomorrow afternoon. This morning I have been darning socks and have done six pairs, tell Ma.'

Sophie much preferred reading to sewing but she assisted a family friend, Miss Romiley Wright in giving needlework classes to the poorest girls in the slums. Additionally, Sophie organised small treats for the newsboys, pictures of 'stark misery'. With angry pity, Joe described them as bare-footed, clad in cut down old clothes, forlorn and unhappy waifs at every draughty street corner.

AFB records that Sophie was a superintendent of the Manchester Domestic Economy classes, that she joined the VS in 1880, and the IOGT in 1885 at the Concilio et Labore lodge. Her first appearance in print was noted as being in *Outward*, January 1891. This might be a mistake for *Onward*.

Joe and Sophie's Marriage

A rival appearing on the scene made Joe realise he needed to do something about his

unconscious assumption that he and Sophie would one day marry. The tale is amusing for the rival was a journalist, a vegetarian, of good prospects and character. Joe felt WEAA would be quite right if he preferred the rival as a suitor for his precious daughter. Joe was earning a bare twenty-five shillings a week, with no prospects and 'neglected by a thoughtless father and struggling to correct an almost complete want of education.' Sophie in fact was embarrassed by the rival suitor but unsure on how to reveal her wishes to Joe. She employed discussion of the proposal in *John Halifax*[681] to give Joe a helping hand, an appropriate literary touch for WEAA's daughter. The only difficulty that then confronted the couple was breaking the news to WEAA. Joe knew how much WEAA relied on her:

> 'Before I took her away from her Father she had been his right hand. Secretary, housekeeper, companion, they were never separated for long. She brought his clothes and saw to the laundry and repair of them, and she only knew what garments he had and what condition they were in. He was perhaps the most unpractical man that ever left his maker's hand. Books he knew, surely, as few other men knew them. Beginning life as a librarian long continuing it, and finally leaving it for journalism, his knowledge of books filled his mind too full to permit anything practical to enter there.'

Encouraged by Mathilde Hompes, Sophie talked to her father and

found to her relief that 'the dear old Pa thinks we are not too young and would readily consent to an engagement.' WEAA had married young himself and had no regrets on that score. A selfless man, WEAA only wanted Sophie to be happy with her Joe whatever the loss to himself. Given his own struggles, he must have strongly empathised with the young Joe's ambitions to learn shorthand, French, and German, to attend evening classes at Owens, and to overcome the damage of his father's neglect. Joe's loyal love for Sophie had been well proven since they were children together.

Fifteen months later, on 31 December 1886, they were married at the All Saints Register Office at Chorlton on Medlock: as they wished it was a very quiet occasion, attended only by WEAA and Jane. They embarked upon a new life in a cottage on Kingsley Road, Northenden, a secluded village that Joe thought too far from the city to be counted as a suburb. Sophie's delicate sister Rosie joined them there. Next, they ran a market garden in Styal, the model village constructed for the Quarry Bank mill workers. Joe commuted from both these places to his job as legal clerk to Messrs. Farrar & Hall. Northenden had reasonable rail services nearby but travelling from Styal was more difficult. Joe's accounts of the trials and tribulations of catching connections would provide rich material for those who study Manchester's transport and the suburban diaspora that revolved around railway lines.

Joe's health broke down and he concentrated on the market garden. With WEAA's help Joe also embarked on journalism and was commissioned to write a booklet *All About Amber* for Cope's Tobacco Co., quite a prestigious series.[682] This would have been through the instigation of WEAA's friend in tobacco journalism, John Frazer. Joe also catalogued a private library and translated papers for the Inland Canal Congress. Joe was grateful to WEAA, writing in appreciation in

We Two, 'Your grandfather [WEAA] was very widely known in the North of England and was frequently applied to, to recommend men for occasional work where experience in the writing of English, or a knowledge of modern languages was necessary.' Joe was brought in by WEAA to write farming notes in the *Guardian*. They gave up the market garden when Jane Axon died in 1889. Joe became an agent for the General Assurance Company.

Joe was seventy-five when he wrote *We Two* and occasionally the narrative doubles back on itself as he revisits distant scenes. He mentions WEAA frequently, always with wonder at the sweetness of his nature and the contrast with his own terrifying father. Joe loved WEAA's humour, a trait shared by Sophie, 'if any incident concealed within it the remotest shape of a humorous entendre his response was immediate.'

Ernest Charles Armytage Axon (1868-1947)

Ernest has already appeared in this book as a young man, closely following in WEAA's footsteps. Ernest was bright, intelligent, his observations spiced with dry irony. Like his father he enjoyed gossip, motivated by curiosity rather than malice. Both could say as

WEAA did ‘I think I have gossiped through the alphabet.’[683]

But what was Ernest like as a boy? He is surely the child in the anecdote WEAA related in *How to Succeed in the World*, ‘A boy of three years of age, hearing a visitor of his father’s make use of the popular saying, that “an honest man is the noblest work of God;” made the innocent annotation upon it: “No, sir, my mamma is the noblest work of God.”[684]

One of Ernest’s childhood letters in AFB is a real gem, not just for what it reveals of the mischievous boy but of the warmth of the whole family. His sister, the family dog, the stern but kind servant all feature. The letter is dated 4 October 1877 when Ernest would have been nearly nine years old. It seems remarkably advanced and very much in the sharp narrative style that make Ernest’s adult letters so readable. It is worth giving in full:

> ‘My Dear Mamma,
> I hope you are all well. I should like to be with you and see the Cumberland hills. I will tell you I have been a naughty boy last night I got in the rain water tank Mary put me to bed without tea and said she would not give me any tea but she did for when it was dark she brought me a jug of tea and a slice of bread. I rigged my boat up on Tuesday there is a sail and a rudder. Lucy Donbavand brought to frocks for Rosy, one yellow the other is something like grey. Will you bring a wheel barrow for me. Mary said I do not deserve anything. Romp has dog biscuits now and she seems to like them very much. Catholics are scuttling again, last night I was watching them running the Wesleyans the sound of clogs made me go to the front bedroom kisses I am your loving son Ernest Axon’

The letter closes with five rows of extravagantly scrawled kisses.

Ernest's own recollections in various letters, illustrate that, like his siblings, he had a close relationship with WEAA. He was fascinated by learning of his father's friends, Ernest Jones the Chartist leader, who died the year after he was born and the novelist, Mrs Linnaeus Banks.

The forms in AFB have been annotated by Ernest, including the ones for himself. There is a photograph of him as a serious sixteen-year-old, and three letters from childhood. Ernest grew much taller than Sophie, reaching six feet as an adult. Like his father and sister, he was short sighted, and like his father he had black hair and dark brown eyes. He is recorded as having measles in 1890 and blood spitting the following year. Perhaps he only just escaped the consumption that destroyed his mother and two sisters. He had a breakdown of health in 1915 and was exempted from military service after a medical examination in 1918.

Ernest noted in AFB that he was not christened. There is a long list of schools he attended in AFB: Albion Schools at Ashton-under-Lyne, Miss Keeling's at Barton on Irwell, the Wesleyan School at Barton, and Miss Donbavand's school at Rusholme, He was a boarder from October to December 1880 at the peculiar Erroll House, Lytham. Dame schools, religious schools and boarding schools were all part and parcel of ways to gain education, and Ernest seems to have experienced them all.

Ernest did turn vegetarian in the Errol House year, perhaps part of the school's 'desired way', but in 1886 he gave up the IOGT. His sister Rosie for a time stopped being a vegetarian: there seems to have been no coercion from their parents.

The only mention of his reading is in a letter Ernest wrote in 1943, recalling his delight in a quarto volume of Captain Cook's Voyages, 'with most entrancing pictures of natives dressed in beads and that kind of thing.'[685]

Ernest, Library Assistant

In AFB Ernest listed all his positions with the

Manchester Public Libraries from starting as a Junior Assistant in the Reference Library on 13 May 1881 through to appointment as Deputy Chief Librarian in 1912, and his retirement in 1932. Several times in other documents Ernest commented bitterly on the low pay his father received even as a senior librarian and on the lack of money in his childhood. Having a reasonable income must have been critical to him for he listed his own earnings in relentless detail in these notes, including payments received as the editor of the *VM*.

Presumably household finances dictated that he had to earn at the age of thirteen, but it would be interesting to know what Ernest felt about not having a higher education. He certainly regretted that his father never had this chance. Was it his own wish to start a library career at an even younger age than his father? Many boys wanted the independence of earning a wage, and the long hours at the Reference Library do not seem to have crushed his spirits.

Ernest joined the Manchester and Salford Vegetarian Society in 1884, and the VS in 1886. He also wrote in his notes of being elected to the LCAS on 12 October 1888 and that 'I read my first paper same night.' This is the only use of first person in his notes, touching evidence of his young pride.

On 11 August 1891 Ernest married Florence Rogerson. Ernest and Florence moved to Moss Side where their son, Geoffrey Rogerson was born on 23 May 1892. Ernest was heartbroken when Florence died on 20 July 1893, recording in AFB, 'We were married for less than 2 years.'

Ernest remained a vegetarian and referred to

'being a teetotaller' in 1943[686] but a retirement gift of two fine pipes in a case suggests he succumbed to tobacco.

Katharine Janet Armytage Axon (1872-1890)

Kitty, the little girl of *The One-Legged Robin*, grew up to make a remarkable impression on her family, family friends, the vegetarian, and the temperance communities. On the Galton form her occupation is given as journalist. She is described on the form as five feet five with brown hair, grey eyes, short sighted and 'Fond of reading and writing. She was a public speaker of ability.'

If Sophie and Joe had seemed young for their age in their leisure time pursuits, Kitty was a grown woman by the time she was sixteen. Like Sophie, there is no record of her schooling in AFB, and all that is known is that she too was tutored by Miss Hompes.

Kitty was a writer, a lecturer, a pianist, a teacher in Charter Street Ragged School, a member of LCAS and a visitor, or social worker, in a slum district 'a corner in which the ravages of the drink curse are all too abundant' as *The Temperance Star* described it.[687] She was a vice-templar in IOGT and a member of the Executive of the VS.

She was a vegetarian for the last five and a half years of her life. More evidence that WEAA and Jane were liberal parents, allowing their children to decide such issues for themselves. Kitty acted as

superintendent for Miss Romiley Wright's cookery school at the Trevelyan Hotel and helped promote the Sunday lectures movement at the Victoria Hall, Salford. She had corresponded with Templar Lodges all over the world, including one for soldiers in India. She was warmly welcomed by the Lodge soldiers and the families when she visited them at the Edinburgh Cavalry Barracks.

Remarkably Kitty may have been one of the first women to be employed by a Manchester newspaper. She was indeed hardly a woman as she was only about fifteen when she was apparently employed at the *Guardian*. There are some hints of this in AP letters, but the only definite statement is in the *Bury Times*, 'a position was also found for his gifted third daughter for a year or two up to her death – perhaps the first instance of the kind in connection with the newspaper press of that city.'[688]

WEAA was involved with both the Bible Christian Church and the Unitarians but avoided formal alliance to a particular sect. This caused some debate after his death. Kitty was a firm Unitarian all her short life, having attended Monton Church as a child.

Both Sophie and Kitty were close to WEAA but perhaps there was a special dimension to his relationship with Kitty.

Kitty delighted in creative writing, in conjuring up stories from her encounters with
the harsh realities of tenement life. Her style is simple with succinct descriptions and sympathetic portraits of the characters. The tales are all moulded to bear the temperance

message but there is an attractive charm in the characters and narrative with observed details that lift them above the norm for such texts. She is likely to have received guidance and encouragement from her father. His novel, *The Gambler's Daughter. Or John Dudley's Secret,* is in very much the same style but weaker.

WEAA published Kitty's book *The Tenants of Johnson's Court* as her memorial. The dedication was to the novelist Mrs Banks. She accepted the tribute graciously, 'It is very delicately worded and all that it should be.'[689] Mrs Banks, experienced in sorrows, had understood the pain the family suffered as well as giving the practical help of reading through Kitty's proofs. Blunt as ever she told WEAA how she had thought he, not Kitty, had died, 'When I saw the black-envelope I exclaimed "Then he is gone!" quite thinking it was the poor fellow who lingers as it were on the razor's edge!'[690]

In the introduction Miss Lindsay described Kitty's life within the family, her wide range of reading, including texts in German and classical writers, her enjoyment of cooking, knitting, fashion and music, and her developing interest in botany. Her favourites were Keats and Shelley, and her reading included Thackeray, Scott, Arnold, Macaulay, Mrs Gaskell and the Brontës. As well as her vivid pen portrait of Kitty, Miss Lindsay reinforces the picture of the WEAA household as welcoming and inspiring. She noted the large

circle of distinguished friends, the opportunities to explore everything from music to nature, and the freedom for children to develop in their own directions.

Humour was often mentioned in relation to WEAA, Sophie and Ernest. Joe in
referred to Sophie's 'pawky humour' and one of Ernest's correspondents used the same phrase for him. Kitty also possessed 'a sense of humour and a power of quiet irony, unique in one so young' as Miss Lindsay described it. [691]

Yet another link bound Kitty and WEAA. There is a series of AP letters, written in 1888, from Mrs M H Garnet-Barboza, four to WEAA and five to Kitty. These relate both to temperance and to black activism. Kitty's temperance mission is well attested, but it is only from these letters that her involvement with African Americans is revealed. Mrs M H Garnet-Barboza was the daughter of Henry Highland Garnet who escaped with his family from slavery to become the educator and minister still remembered today. His daughter founded a school in Liberia in his honour. Her letters to WEAA and Kitty arose from the IOGT connection. She appears to have met them whilst campaigning across Britain for support in Liberia. WEAA organised the talk she gave

at Manchester Town Hall.[692] Her letters to Kitty express intense affection and gratitude. She addresses Kitty, twenty-seven years younger than herself, as follows, 'Sister Katharine is my foster mother in Grand Templary who has so lovingly led me on. By God's help I am going on!'[693]

Sophie left home to be married in 1886 when Kitty was fourteen. Inevitably care for her invalid mother and her father devolved upon Kitty. Ernest was working long hours at the Manchester Free Library whilst her sister Rosie had chosen to live with Sophie and Joe. Even so she managed to become a journalist.

Evelyn Rose Armytage Axon (1877-1906)

Rosie, as she was always called, was born at Bank Cottage at Patricroft, Barton-upon-Irwell, on 2 March 1877. She remains a pale figure besides her two energetic elder sisters, and it is only Joe's recollections that bring her to life. There is one page of notes for Rosie in AFB, covering the years 1891 onwards. From this and from *We Two* the picture emerges of a daughter who spent little time at home as she grew up. From 1887 to 1890 Rosie lived with Joe and Sophie, first at Northenden and then at their idyllic 'farmlet' in Styal, returning with them to the joint household in Bowdon after her mother's death.

What did Joe have to say about this rather fey sister-in-law? He described Rosie with sympathetic affection. It is easy to imagine

Joe, the boisterous father who later played delightfully rough games with his own children, being quiet and gentle with Rosie:

> ‘When we settled in our Northenden home Sophie’s younger sister Rosie, came to live with us. She always seemed to me an unusual child. Petite, pale, nice featured, gentle and sweet tempered, she was a lovable little creature. …When she came to be with us at Northenden she was content and happy to be with Sophie, who was some eight years her senior, and she made no effort to find friends of her own there. We were pleased to have her with us, both for her own sake and Sophie’s, well removed from the cruel atmosphere of Manchester, the situation was better for Rosie’s health and her quiet content made her a good companion to correct the loneliness Sophie felt, and which sometimes made it painful for me to leave her in the mornings.’

Rosie, like the rest of the family, soon had to face devastating blows.

CHAPTER 20

THE YEARS OF CRISIS IN OUR LIVES

Jane's Death

Joe wrote bleakly, 'The years of 1889, 1890 and 1891 were years of crisis in our lives.' The first loss was Jane.

Jane had suffered for years from 'a kind of general debility,'[694] but consumption had not been suspected. The attack came suddenly, devastating her within months. She died on 18 July 1889 from phthisis, as pulmonary consumption was called. WEAA's adopted sister, Elizabeth Axon, was present at the deathbed. Jane was buried two days later at St Paul's Church, Kersal Moor.

The only obituary I have found for Jane is from the *Manchester City News* 28 July 1889, and I believe WEAA as a regular contributor either supplied the information or composed it himself. There are details only he would have felt significant, as in the poignant reference to the lectures at Blackpool, the ones WEAA was asked to cover for Edwin Waugh. This is the full entry:

> THE LATE MRS. AXON,- Mrs. Axon, who

was buried at Kersal Church on Saturday last, was a familiar figure twelve or sixteen years ago at the soirees of the Manchester Literary Club, and at other scientific and artistic gatherings of the time. She was born at Dukinfield in 1843, and was intended for a musical career, but was prevented from pursuing by a youthful illness. Her parents having come to reside in Manchester, she married Mr. William E. A. Axon in 1866, and in the early years of their married life she assisted him in his researches at the British Museum and elsewhere. She took a keen interest in social questions, and a paper with her signature appeared in the *Sunday Review* describing the first opening of the Manchester Art Gallery on Sunday afternoon. She also contributed a few brief notes on natural history and folk-lore to *Hardwick's Science Gossip* and to the *Manchester Guardian Notes and Queries*. On the foundation of the Ancoats Brotherhood she became a member, although conscious that her failing health would prevent her attendance at its gatherings. Later she urged her husband to accept the invitation

> to give two lectures at the Blackpool summer assembly of the National Home Reading Union. When the time came, however, for their delivery her condition was so precarious that they had to be read in the absence of Mr. Axon, and the second was so read only a few hours before her death. A long stay at Southport had proved unavailing, and after a protracted illness, borne with the greatest cheerfulness and resignation, Mrs. Axon died on July 18.

In losing Jane, WEAA also lost his fellow campaigner and best friend. The obituary makes it abundantly clear that Jane fully shared WEAA's antiquarian and natural history interests, supported his *LNQ* column, and had a similar reforming spirit. WEAA was fortunate to have a wife who took over practical management of their household affairs as well as being active in the same public concerns.

Despite her failing strength Jane had tried to participate in WEAA's commitments, passing on the responsibilities when she could no longer maintain them to her daughters. Joe Haddow's humorous description of his own daughters, as 'man haters to the last of them'

or ‘strange young icebergs’[695] as well as the fine generations of women that came from those who did marry, reflect well on WEAA and Jane’s encouragement of their daughters’ independence. Sophie’s sprightly spirit and the leading role she took in her own marriage were very much in her parents’ mode.

The Armytage

Since Sophie’s marriage and Rosie’s departure, Kitty had been left alone to look after her parents as well as pursuing her career as a journalist. Ernest lived at home but was working long hours at the Reference Library.

After Jane’s death, Kitty was burnt out. To recuperate, WEAA and Kitty stayed with their friends the Godbolds at 11 Royal Terrace, St Leonards on Sea.

On their return, Kitty struggled to keep the household afloat. Joe and Sophie rallied to her aid, and all moved into a joint household on Ashley Road, Bowdon, with Sophie as the head as Joe described it. Sophie took control, improving the diet so radically that even Joe was won to vegetarian habits. In their usual spirit of irony, they named the house ‘The Armytage.’

Then, as now, Bowdon was an affluent residential area with businessmen forming a high proportion of the residents. The area had been developed from the 1840s and the railway station opened in 1849. Ashley Road is a main route through Bowdon, lined with terraces or semi-detached houses rather than the substantial mansions of nearby Green Walk. For the first time WEAA was living far south of the city. Historically Bowdon, now in Greater Manchester, was in Cheshire.

It is a measure of the Axon family affection and loyalty that Joe and Sophie readily gave up their own home and market garden to support WEAA and Kitty. The conventional approach would have been for Kitty as the single daughter to devote herself to caring for her father. Perhaps this would have happened if Kitty’s own health

had not broken down only three months after Jane's death. Ernest noted on the Galton Form that the first indications of Kitty's consumption appeared on 13 November 1889.

Victorian families dreaded such signs as it was common for the disease to ravage through a household. In 1848 Dr Thomas Yeoman vividly described the terrible disease, still devastating the population in the later decades of the century, 'Consumption, Decline or Phthisis, is the plague-spot of our climate; amongst diseases it is the most frequent and fatal; it is the destroying angel who claims a fourth of all who die.'[696] There was no knowledge of its cause or the means of infection until 1882 when the German bacteriologist, Dr Robert Koch, identified the bacillus. The illness manifested itself in many ways. Along with coughing, there could be increasing debility, emaciation, fevers, the latent or occult symptoms, as they were called. The classic picture of the invalid coughing out their life in blood usually came in the last stages. Like her mother, Kitty's decline was swift.

Kitty was sent to stay with family friends, including Miss Lindsay on the Isle of Man, in the hope the pure air would improve her. Sophie's baby, Helen Josephine, known as Jo,

was born on 23 April 1890. A few weeks later Sophie and Jo were in Bristol, staying with Joe's sister Nellie for a desperately needed holiday. As well as recently giving birth, Sophie had nursed some of the household, including Ernest, through measles. Even in Bristol she kept 'her finger on the control of things at home.'[697] She received a hysterical and homesick letter from Kitty.

Unlike many Victorian fathers, WEAA took his share in nursing Kitty. He wrote to his friend Henry Salt on 5 June 1890 explaining that he was at Colwyn Bay, looking after Kitty 'who is recovering from a long and weakening illness.' Being 'full handed', he asked Salt to place his lecture on Shelley as late as possible in the syllabus. At this point there was still hope: WEAA expected to be back within the fortnight.[698]

Another Casket rifled of its gem!
Sophie returned home. She nursed Kitty devotedly for the next few months, as well as running the household and coping with her baby. As Joe recounted none of them realised how Sophie's strength had been pushed to the limits for all was done with sweetness and kindness.

According to a snippet in the *Co-operative News*, Kitty managed to correct the proofs of her book *The Tenants of Johnson's C*ourt on her

deathbed.[699] She knew her father would ensure its publication. Joe described Kitty's last day on 25 October 1890, her quiet welcome of the doctor's words that she only had hours left, and her end, 'The last words this calm young spirit uttered to Sophie were "Oh look there" her eyes were directed to the corner of the room and a look of great content was spread over her face as if she saw something of extraordinary beauty, which I am sure she did, something which Sophie's living eyes could not see.'

Such sad situations of one death following another in families were common. Friends in WEAA's wide circles had known of Kitty's decline. The *Enquirer* obituary was well informed, 'Born on Dec 2, 1872, and subject to consumption, hereditary from her mother, she had never been altogether strong. Soon after the death of Mrs. Axon, last year, she completely broke down, and after months of patient suffering, ultimately succumbed.'[700]

WEAA received many letters on the death of his beloved daughter, and these were no conventional expressions of condolence. The Rev. James Clark of the Bible Christian Church

wrote tellingly of WEAA's being 'doubly widowed.' [701] John Bone lamented, 'I think that your daughter has done more good in her short life than I in all of mine.'[702] The poet Samuel Laycock whom WEAA had done much to support composed a long, unpublished poem in honour of Katharine on the theme of:

> Another Casket rifled of its gem!
> Another branch torn from the parent tree!
> [703]

Arthur Croxton, addressing his letter from the Examiner Office, found writing the obituary painful, a rare insight into the emotions journalists must suppress:

> 'Kath was one of those sweet, loving, helpful girls, whose death causes a blank it is hard to fill. Mr Phillips asked me to write something about her. You may guess how difficult it was to write a cold formal account of her work when one had known her so well & when one had worked with her, in her & my enthusiastic day.'[704]

There was a long obituary article for her in *The Temperance Star* by Joseph Knight. Like several others, Joseph Knight was aware of how unusual she was, 'Still a girl in years she had entered upon the work of a woman.' [705] The large photograph in *The Temperance Star*

shows her at sixteen, a striking portrait, taken by Henry J Godbold, when WEAA and Kitty were recuperating at his house at St. Leonards on Sea. WEAA distributed copies of this photograph after Kitty died, prompting Meta Gaskell to exclaim, 'The face tells what was the spirit within, as a flame shines through a lovely lamp.'[706]

Miss Lindsay wrote a detailed obituary in the *VM* as well as a posthumous memoir in the introduction to *The Tenants of Johnson's Court*. Miss Lindsay covered most aspects of Kitty's life, character, and achievements in dignified prose but towards the end added a telling detail of what had appealed to her personally, a trait which applied equally to WEAA:

> 'The thing I found most striking in her conversation was her entire freedom from any acknowledgement of those social distinctions which play so large a part in the social intercourse of vulgar minds. She spoke of every acquaintance as of a human being and an equal, without inquiring, or heeding, the 'class' so-called, to which others might suppose them to belong. Refinement was, to her, a thing of value in

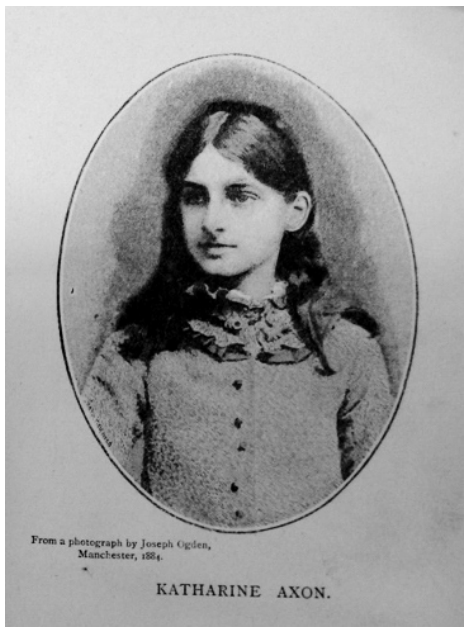
itself, and not a means of enabling people to climb the social ladder.' [707]

Joe appreciated the truth of what Miss Lindsay wrote for he quoted this passage in *We Two*. WEAA was remarkably free from pretentious manners and anxiety over status, and he passed this attitude on to his children.

The significance of the VS in WEAA's life has only been lightly touched on. In the 1870s his articles and papers for the VS were mainly anonymous but from the eighties onwards he produced many signed articles as well as giving lectures. The lectures were printed as pamphlets and proved very popular. From 1888 to 1894 he edited the *VM* with Kitty as his loyal assistant whilst she was well enough, 'For some time he was materially assisted in this work by his daughter, Miss Katharine Axon, a most promising writer, and an ardent worker for Vegetarianism and temperance, whose brilliant career was cut short in her 18th year.'[708]

A year later WEAA sent copies of the memorial volume *The Tenants of Johnson's Court* to many friends, especially those in the VS and Templar circles. The book prompted a

fresh wave of responses and sorrow at the loss of such a talented girl. Two photographs were included showing Kitty at thirteen and sixteen. The one at sixteen taken by Godbold has already been mentioned. The other was taken by the Manchester photographer Joseph Ogden. This is unusually informal. Kitty's appearance is relaxed and natural, a beautiful girl with rich dark hair, strong level brows, dark eyes, and the high Axon forehead.



From a photograph by Joseph Ogden, Manchester, 1884.

KATHARINE AXON.

Mrs Banks, Meta Gaskell, Elliot Stock, William Scarborough and George Milner, President of the MLC, are amongst those whose affectionate responses have been preserved in

AP. George Milner strikingly regretted the social codes that had held him back in her lifetime, ‘Kitty, as you called her, was always a great favourite of mine and I blame myself now for the conventional reticence which prevented my saying what I thought of her while she was still living – I mean to you, or to herself. And now it is too late!’[709]
In 1892 Ernest included an essay *Kersal Moor* by Janet Armytage (Kitty’s pseudonym} in his anthology, .[710] The learned but readable article could have been written by WEAA. and Kitty echoes her father in giving a long quotation of Edwin Waugh’s poem Wild and Free. All three Axons, WEAA, Ernest and Kitty, feature in this collection. Ernest’s best tribute to his beloved sister,

Reactions

How did WEAA deal with all these crises? It was tightknit family: they shared aspirations and activities and bore together as best they could the burdens of nursing. Joe’s *We Two* gives a glimpse of WEAA as a man broken by the loss first of Jane and then of Kitty, ‘To lose so precious a life wounded us all deeply, especially her Father. Coming only months after the death of his wife, we feared the blow

might have a dangerous effect on his own health.'

Kitty's funeral service was held at the Bible Christian Church, Salford and she was then buried in her mother's grave at St. Paul's, Kersal. WEAA had these words placed over the grave, 'Knowledge by suffering entereth, and life is perfected by death.'[711]

After the funeral WEAA, Sophie, baby Jo, and Rosie journeyed south to St Leonards, to their old sanctuary of Mr and Mrs Godbold's vegetarian home. Sophie wrote to Joe that 'Pa is reminded of Kath at almost every turn, but fortunately it doesn't seem to trouble him.' Perhaps an instance of WEAA's well known calm or perhaps the reminders were in fact a comfort to him. Sophie herself had the very painful and common experience of wanting to tell Kitty things and then realising afresh she was no longer there and 'I shall not be able to tell her anything again.'

WEAA struggled through his exhaustion, apologising to a correspondent for his delay in answering a query, 'Your letter reached me at a time when I was unable to attend to any matters not absolutely indispensable.'[712] Despite this WEAA managed to provide his usual expert information: he directed the enquirer to his entry on Leigh Phillips in *Annals*, adding more information about the weeding of the old Natural History Society Museum on its transfer to Owens. The black-edged letter was addressed from the Godbolds

on 14 November 1890: WEAA mentioned he would be back at home the following week if more help was needed.

WEAA, Sophie and baby Jo returned to Manchester, but Rosie stayed on with the Godbolds, attending the Hastings and St Leonard's High School.

Emigration

To complete Joe and Sophie's story. For them, consumption had claimed too many lives. They had lost their childhood friends the Porter sisters, Sophie's mother, Joe's mother, and then Kitty. Joe too had been diagnosed with the onset of the disease, 'I was threatened with the same trouble that had just carried off our dear Kath, and Doctor Haden Guest, whose wife was a cousin of your mother's maternal grandfather, and a very reliable physician, had expressed a most definite opinion that a complete change of climate was essential.'

In addition, the lack of prospects in Manchester, the dream of a better life, as for many others in industrial Lancashire, convinced Joe that they should emigrate. He had no sentimental attachment to Manchester, a brutal city that had nearly destroyed him. Nor did he have close family ties. His married sister Nellie was settled in Bristol, his younger sister Emily was living with their father with whom Joe 'had little in common, and we were perhaps better apart.' Joe understood that Sophie's situation was very different. WEAA greatly depended on her, but they now had their own child to consider. Joe acknowledged in retrospect how painful it was for Sophie to leave her father, and that she had born this in silence.

WEAA accepted what was best for Sophie and Joe, just as he had accepted their early marriage. He was not a man to make selfish demands. As Joe recalled later, 'I have often thought that he must have resembled a ship without a chronometer when I took away his daughter. It was in one sense a cruel thing to do but I have no recollection of being impressed with that point of view at the time.' Joe voyaged to New Zealand, embarking on the sailing ship Crusader at Greenock on 25 February 1891 with the intention of paving the way for Sophie and Jo to join him. A heavy outbreak of influenza hit Britain in 1891, and Joe was devastated to hear his

little daughter died on 16 June from bronchitis following on from influenza. Jo was buried in the same grave as her grandmother and her aunt Kitty at St Paul's, Kersal, the church Joe has attended as a child. Members of his family were buried close by.

Sophie and Helen Josephine (Jo)

Sophie sailed on S.S. Doric from London to Wellington, joining Joe in November 1891. Together they founded a dynasty whose descendants to this day remember WEAA, Joe and Sophie.

Joe and Sophie

Sophie and Joe's grandson, George Haddow, recalled a characteristic of Sophie that was an echo of her parents' household where money was tight and had to be carefully managed. George Haddow wrote this in reference to his own father Ughtred, Joe and Sophie's seventh child, 'Sophie was very frugal. All her life she

kept a record of every penny she spent [like a banker] and this really got up Ughtred's wick. He thought it showed a mean streak. It was a Victorian trait and good.'[713]

Moss Side

As mentioned previously, 1891 at least brought a wedding. On 11 August 1891 Ernest married Florence, daughter of Thomas Rogerson of Calderbank Farm, Flixton. Thomas was also a senior partner in the family firm of Manchester shirt manufacturers, a neat combination of country and city. The splendid wedding took place at the Church of England church in Davyhulme, another step towards middle class respectability. The newspaper cutting in AFB notes that WEAA took the photographs, the first mention of his new skill.

Ernest and Florrie moved to 47 Derby Street in the pleasant township of Moss Side. They only enjoyed their solitude for a few weeks. When Sophie's departure in the late summer finally broke up the Bowdon household, WEAA did not attempt to set up on his own but as was customary moved in with his son and daughter-in-law.

Events then crowd in. Ernest and Florrie's son, Geoffrey Rogerson, was born on 23 May 1892. Everything changed again in November 1892 when WEAA remarried.

CHAPTER 21

LIKE YOU I DO NOT WISH TO LIVE ALONE

Elisabeth R Lueft (Setta)
WEAA's second wife was known as Setta. Family photographs and a portrait by Samuel Lawson Booth delineate a strikingly handsome woman.

She was born in 1870 at Seligenstadt, Hesse, the youngest daughter of a merchant, Jakob Lüft, married to 'Kaufmann' as AFB records it. There is a small photograph in AFB of a stern looking priest. The note reads, 'Lueft, cousin of Mrs Axon's father, priest & Educator cf. the great German biography.'

Setta's parents died when she was a child. She was brought up by an aunt in the pretty town of Miltenberg, Bavaria, and educated at the Töcht Institit there. According to the *VM,*[714] in 1889 she came to England to visit a friend and spent time in the house of Dr Haden Guest in Hulme before her marriage to WEAA. AFB version is that she came to England as a German governess to Dr Haden Guest's family. She is described as convent educated.

By the early nineteenth century there was a substantial German merchant and manufacturing presence in Manchester. They were firmly integrated into Manchester life whilst proudly promoting their culture

through the Hallé Orchestra, the Manchester Goethe Society, and other societies. WW1 wiped all this out. As Su Coates wrote in her seminal study, 'In short, the First World War destroyed Manchester's German community and the feeling of ill-will that prevailed after the war and the coming of the Second World War sealed its fate..'[715]

Setta had come to the right city for employment as a German teacher. There was great demand for the language in commercial and manufacturing circles. As mentioned, Mathilde Hompes, daughter of a Dutch mother and a German cigar merchant, long established in Manchester taught WEAA's daughters and Joe German. Joe Haddow also attended evening class though he was not sure the effort was worthwhile given there were so many Germans in good positions.

Dr Alexander Haden Guest
I have not traced Dr Alexander Haden Guest's birth in UK records. His surname suggests a German background. My guess is that he arrived from Germany as a child, and that his family was Jewish. His descendants certainly dipped in and out of Judaism.

Family legend relates that Alexander Haden Guest 'went to America in his youth with the idea of liberating the Red Indians. He returned somewhat disillusioned.'[716] He practised medicine in Oldham and then in 1881 qualified at Glasgow and at the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh. AFB suggests he set up in Hulme around 1882. He was in a partnership, Guest and Arthy, and when this

was amiably dissolved in 1894, he continued to run the practice from 76 Dorset Street. Advertisements for domestics and the announcement of their daughter Lydia's birth in March 1887 confirm 76 Dorset Street as the family home.

It was also a lively centre for the gathering of Manchester intelligentsia. Haden Guest was described as having 'many friends among the Fabians and radical thinkers of the day.'[717] WEAA and Jane were amongst this company. Haden Guest remained in Hulme until he retired, a much-loved doctor amongst the poor. He died in 1897 at Kalgour, Knutsford.

The Haden Guests may have heard of Setta through connections back home or through the German community in Manchester. Of course, they may simply have advertised for a German governess.

Axons and Guests

There is no record of how WEAA first met Haden Guest, but a rare Eclectic Society notice shows that WEAA was President and Haden Guest on the Eclectic Society Council in 1872.[718]

The only Haden Guest letter in AP is dated 15 June 1872. It is an affectionate communication between two men who regularly visit each other's homes and are in

cahoots. Haden Guest wrote, ‘Have you seen the Town News for this & last week? It gives us a rare puff.’ He also praises WEAA’s speech and adds ‘but felt quite grieved to see you look so ill.’ This must refer to the *Guardian* report of the inaugural meeting of the Manchester Eclectic Society.[719]

Then there was the remote familial connection between Dr Haden Guest and WEAA’s first wife Jane. This may have played a part in how the three people first met.

Remote the connection might have been, but the links were strong. Even after Jane’s death the families remained close. Ernest took care over the years to add details to AFB, outlining Dr Haden Guest’s career as well as updating the histories of his two sons, two daughters and their children, into the 1940s.

Haden Guest’s son Leslie, perhaps one of Setta’s pupils as a child, became a radical doctor like his father. He campaigned against force feeding of Suffragettes and worked for children in famine-stricken areas in Eastern Europe, eventually being made a Labour Life Peer. *The Times* obituary for Leslie records that he ‘was born at Oldham, Lancashire, on March 10, 1877, the son of Alexander Haden-Guest, a surgeon and physician of Manchester, who was himself an active worker for the left in the north during the second half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the son could scarcely have

been other than a rebel and a fighter, for his father kept open house at Hulme for such thinkers as Annie Besant, Herbert Burrows, H.M. Hyndman, J.M. Robertson, the Fabian pamphleteers and essayists, and odd exiles and travellers from abroad.' [720] This sounds very similar to WEAA and Jane's home, open to all their friends and a place for fervent debates.

Leslie's son from his second marriage, David Guest, scientist and communist, was killed in the Spanish Civil War. In the memoir edited by David's mother there is the interesting snippet that two paternal ancestors fought against each other at Peterloo. His maternal grandfather, Colonel Goldsmid, was a renowned Zionist, said to have inspired the character of George Eliot's eponymous Daniel Deronda. The present Baron Haden-Guest, the fifth in line, is the American actor, Christopher Guest, married to Jamie Lee Curtis. The Haden-Guest family produced some very colourful characters.

Setta as German Governess

The exact date of Setta's arrival in Manchester in 1889 is not known. Even if she arrived before Jane's death on 18 July it is unlikely the two women would have met socially given Jane's failing health. As a regular visitor, WEAA would have encountered Setta at the Haden Guests. In 1892 the Hulme Day Nursery afforded further opportunity for encounters as both were active supporters.

Second Marriage

To recap: following Sophie's departure in the late summer of 1891, WEAA joined the newly wedded Ernest and Florrie at their house at 47 Derby Street, Moss Side. Their son, Geoffrey Rogerson Axon, was born on 23 May 1892. At some stage in 1891 or 1892 Rosie returned from her stay with the Godbolds in St Leonards. As the last daughter available she may have been needed at home, especially as Florrie's health was declining. Yet the fragile Rosie was no replacement for the forceful Sophie. Rosie briefly attended the nearby Dulcie Street Board School.

WEAA and Setta's marriage took place on 19 November 1892 at Chorlton Register Office, and the witnesses were James Turner, Haden Guest, and Emma O'Brien. Setta's address was given as 197 Withington Road, Whalley Range. James Turner was the temperance activist and MLC member who ran the Temperance Hotel on Halliwell Street in the city centre. His letters to WEAA are full of confidences and in 1909 WEAA was one of the signatories on a printed fund-raising appeal for him.[721] Emma O'Brien was the secretary of the Hulme Day Nursery, pioneered by Haden Guest. As well as teaching the Haden Guest children German, Setta had become his active helper there.

As in preceding centuries, with so many wives dying in childbirth, it was common for widowers to remarry, often choosing younger women to care for them. WEAA was fortunate to marry a bright young woman, twenty-four years younger than himself. Judging by the letters of congratulation his friends were sympathetic to his need for a loving companion. His eminent temperance friend from Chorley, Alfred E Eccles, wrote of his own impending marriage that 'Like you I do

not wish to live alone.'[722]
Ernest was heartbroken when his beloved Florrie died on 20 July 1893.Yet Ernest went on to marry twice more. In 1895 he married Julia Williamson, the daughter of a wealthy builder. As well as looking after young Geoffrey, she generously let her daughter, Florence Evelyn, born 26 January 1896 be named after Ernest's first wife and after his sister, Evelyn Rose. Julia died in 1926 and seven years later he married a much younger woman, Dora McLardy, a Manchester librarian. Even the widowed Joe Haddow in his mid-seventies 'married a peach,' his secretary Rebe Day. The family sensibly 'had felt delighted to have someone so nice to care for him.'[723] Perhaps, as Doctor Johnson pronounced, second marriage was really the highest compliment to the first wife. Families had to be pragmatic about the care of young children and widowed spouses. In WEAA's case both wives were his friends and partners, fully sharing his interests as well as having their own pursuits.

Household Changes

In November 1892, Ernest and Florrie moved with baby Geoffrey to a flat in Heaton Mersey,

leaving the Moss Side house to the newly-weds. Rosie left the following year. Setta's daughter Dorothy Setta Armytage Axon, was born on 28 April 1894. Family photographs show her to be a very attractive, dark-eyed little girl, closely entwined to her mother. Dorothy won the affections of her parents' friends, sometimes expressed with what now seems sentimental gushing. Florence Baird Smith, De Quincey's daughter, in one of her regular letters to WEAA requested 'some more delicious little stories of the wee girly.'[724] References in AP suggest that over the years Dorothy was frequently away at school or missing her mother. Setta suffered ill health and sometimes returned to family in Germany to recuperate. Albert Broadbent, an active member of the VS and a very close friend of WEAA's wrote, 'I saw Dorothy Saturday she looked bonny, and said she would like to see her mother again.'[725] Dorothy was then six years old.

The family remained at 47 Derby Street, Moss Side until the end of 1899 when they moved to a new home at 6 Cecil Street, Greenheys, on the border with Moss Side. Archive photographs show the two streets as typical middle-class residential areas. The houses are substantial red brick terraces with small front gardens and the occasional tree. Both districts had been rural townships with fine houses and farms. By the end of the century, they were predominantly working class and industrial.

Setta and Dorothy

Rosie

AFB records that Rosie gave up being a vegetarian in October 1892, resumed in 1893 and then gave up again. She may have blamed the vegetarian diet for Jane and Kitty's deaths and her own precarious health. She left Manchester in 1893, moving to live with Cousin

Lizzie and her family at Priestcliffe, Miller's Dale, Derbyshire. Two years later she moved with them to Ivy Nook, Wormhill, still in Miller's Dale. Cousin Lizzie Beddows was the married daughter of WEAA's adopted sister Amelia Maria and her husband Samuel Beddows, a local inventor and contractor. Her parents joined Lizzie at Wormhill in their old age.

There were strong bonds between the groups of cousins from both Jane and WEAA's sides of the family, scattered though they were across Manchester, Cheshire, and Derbyshire. The Axons, Davies, Beddows and Quinneys crop up in AP, AFB and Joe's *We Two*.

The most likely explanation for Rosie's move after her father's marriage is the simple fact of her frail health. The exact date of the move is unknown, but it may well have been before WEAA and Setta visited the USA in June 1893. Ernest was struggling with Florence's illness as well as caring for his baby son. Rosie needed more support than her immediate family could offer.

The quiet of the countryside always suited her, first living with the newly wedded Sophie and Joe in Cheshire, and then in these remote villages. Friends mention WEAA's trips to Priestcliffe House to visit Rosie, and to enjoy the countryside himself.

Concerns over Rosie's health continued. AFB records the ominous sign of 'bloodspitting Xmas 97.' In 1898 Rosie sailed to New Zealand, driven, like Joe and Sophie, to seek a healthier climate. Joe wrote, 'The Manchester smoke did not suit her health, which had never been robust, and ultimately the voyage was recommended, as was common in those days when tuberculosis was as great a puzzle to the medical profession as cancer today.'

Ernest recorded the gathering at the London Road Station in Manchester on 16 March 1898 to bid farewell to Rosie as she left for London and R.M.S Gothic, 'The Pater went with her. To see her off were Setta & Dorothy, Ernest, Julia, Geoff & Florrie, Mr & Mrs Beddows, Mrs Crankshaw & Elsie, Ted & Will Davies & Mr Turner.'

In Auckland, Rosie was reunited with her beloved sister and brother-in-law, living with them until 1901, in a very different rural environment to the one they had shared at Styal. After a stay with a Mrs Currie in Brunswick, Rosie returned to Manchester in May 1902, remaining only until March 1903. She sailed back to New Zealand, again on R.M.S. Gothic, perhaps where she first met her future husband, Darius Henry Day, a cooper. She and Darius were married at the Wesleyan Parsonage in Wellington on 30 April 1903. Darius Day bought land near Wanganui so Rosie was never far away from her sister. Joe and Sophie only moved away to the city after Rosie's death.

Rosie had two children but sadly died a month after the birth of her second child on 3 May 1906, a victim of consumption. As Joe wrote, 'the change put off the inevitable but only for a few years, and it was not long before we lost her. Olive was a baby in arms when she died, and with Clifford, the only other child, went to live with the Misses Day, their father's sisters who brought them up and never failed to give then love.' The descendants of Rosie's two children, live on in New Zealand and Canada.

The Hulme Day Nursery

The death of Dr Haden Guest on 9 April 1897 generated surprisingly little notice. However, several references were made in newspapers to the significant improvement he brought to the lives of working women in Hulme. The brief obituary in the *Manchester Evening News* recorded that, 'He was the founder of the Hulme Day Nursery, and took a warm interest in all that affected the health and well-being of the poorer classes, by whom he was held in high esteem. He was a man of wide literary and scientific tastes, and had collected a valuable library. In politics Mr. Guest was an

advanced Liberal.'[726]

In his spell as medical officer for Manchester, Haden Guest had been appalled by the death rate of young children and concluded that a major cause was working mothers having to leave little children to the uncertain care of their siblings or neighbours. Around 1892 he set up a creche at the cramped premises of 36 Great Jackson Street in the heart of crowded Hulme and so transformed the lives of thousands of working women, giving their offspring 'the chance of a vigorous childhood.'

From 1894 onwards the annual meetings of the supporters, held in the Lord Mayor's parlour, chronicled the remarkable impact of the nursery. Incredibly in 1902 admissions ran to 2162 children, mostly babies, an increase of 100 from the previous year. The crêche opened officially at six but really at half-five in the morning and closed at six in the evening. Wire cradles hung from the ceiling of a bright, cheerful room, there were small tables, chairs, cots, baby carriages for trips in good weather and 'an abundance of toys.' Above all there was nourishing food. Few would disagree with the conclusion in the *Guardian*, surely penned by WEAA, that, 'The good effects of pleasant surroundings, proper and sufficient food, and happy occupations during the earliest years of life cannot, indeed, be easily overestimated.'[727]

In 1905 the charge was threepence per day. Widows, deserted wives

and wives with sick husbands were given priority and only needy women could place their children in the nursery. Eventually in 1912 the crêche moved to a larger house on Chester Street and continued to at least 1949.

Some were antagonistic: there are comments in various newspapers disapproving of wives and mothers working but the niceties of ethics had little weight in the desperate reality of many women's lives. The Hulme Day Nursery was entirely financed by supporters and by the charges for childcare. Some institutions like the Chorlton Board of Guardians became subscribers, pragmatically aware that women freed up to work would reduce the demands on their resources.

As might be expected WEAA was involved from the beginning. He was frequently quoted in the newspaper reports of the annual meetings. WEAA remarked on the improved physical state of the children who attended the nursery, each child's role then being 'a small health missionary among the poor.'[728] WEAA noted that the nursery also showed mothers better ways to care for their children. It was almost certainly WEAA who ensured the positive coverage of the Hulme Day Nursery in the *Guardian*. The *Guardian* accounts are full of details, including the attitudes towards working mothers. Even the occupations are mentioned, a wide range including 'charwomen, mantle makers, ironers, fustian cutters, skirt makers, brush makers, tailors' finishers, handkerchief hemmers, and mill

hands.'[729]

Setta's Role

Whilst WEAA played his part in fund raising, planning and publicity for the Hulme Day Nursery, Setta was directly involved in its establishment and management.

There were paid staff, initially a matron, to look after the children but ladies like Setta were there to supervise and monitor. Matilde Hompes, devoted friend of the Axon family, wrote warmly of Setta:

> 'Though Mrs. Axon had an essentially quiet and retired nature she did not permit this to keep her from serving the public interest. She helped Dr. Guest in his efforts to establish the Hulme Day Nursery, and ever took an active and devoted part in the alleviation of the hard lot of the poor in any district in which she might be living.'[730]

Hulme Working Girls' Club

In the first years 36 Great Jackson Street also provided a club for working girls, the full title of all this being Hulme Day Nursery and Working Girls' Club. Running the club may sound like easy do-gooding for ladies: the reality was the work was incredibly hard and challenging. This was the heart of scuttling territory. Andrew Davies' *The Gangs of Manchester* is a terrifying chronicle of how dangerous such streets could be. Scuttlers

fought each other on a massive scale and assaulted passers-by with savage violence. The scuttling girls could be even more brutal than the youths. Running a club in Hulme was not for the faint-hearted.

The first annual meeting was held in 1894, and both the *Manchester Courier* and the *Guardian* described the Club as it appeared at this time. There was a cheery clubroom, a piano and comfortable furniture to provide a sanctuary for working girls. As well as providing a safe place the supporters unusually aimed not at instructing but at developing pleasant relationships with the girls. Religious differences were not allowed to disturb this harmony. About twenty girls came each evening and the ladies of the Committee attended on rotation. Both Setta and Mrs Guest, the Hon. Secretary, were amongst them. WEAA's speech was reported in the *Guardian*, 'An interchange of thought and feeling between the people of one class and those of another could not fail to be mutually beneficial, and he welcomed this institution as helping to increase that general sympathy which would form a bond of union among all classes of the community and tend to promote

the happiness and prosperity of our common country.'[731]

It is not clear how long the club lasted but it was an inspiring forerunner. Similar sanctuaries were appearing in the city, some of them allied to trade unions.

The Manchester Domestic Mission
Setta was a devout Catholic and her daughter Dorothy was raised in the same faith and educated at the Loreto Convent school. Setta attended the magnificent Church of the Holy Family on Oxford Street, now the Church of the Holy Name:

> 'Here, also, she was a highly valued member of the Ladies' Committee for looking after the needs of the poor and the aged and aided in the work of the soup-kitchen. She was always thoroughly devoted to any case she took in hand, and it was generally held that she would spare no trouble in "putting things through."
> A case was safe in her hands.'[732]

Her faith did not prevent her from engaging with Quakers, Unitarians, or non-Catholic missions. Like WEAA she took the broad view that improving life for people should not be linked to a narrow dogma. Family memoirs refer to her range of activities and several co-workers expressed concern that she should not wear herself out. On 3 November 1903 the Rev A W Timmis, a 'missioner' of the Manchester Domestic Mission, wrote to WEAA that he was grieved to hear of Mrs Axon's illness and added, 'We are very glad to have Mrs Axon back as a worker at the Mission but

I beg that she will never endanger her health by district visiting in bad weather or other adverse circumstances.'[733]

As well as district visiting, the long established Manchester Domestic Mission provided two centres, one in Collyhurst and the other in Renshaw-street, Hulme where the Rev A W Timmis was based, and where Setta volunteered. Evening clubs and classes were so popular that by 1904 building extensions were desperately needed. The draw of such clubs, football, and then the spectacular popularity of cinema in Manchester and Salford eventually wiped out scuttling.

Names familiar in the AP correspondence occur again in the accounts of the Mission. Setta and WEAA are moving in the same circles, albeit with different roles. WEAA was there to support the Band of Hope meetings and to report on events for the *Guardian*. As well as Alderman Rawson, the chair of the mission, the Rev S A Steinthal was a particular friend of WEAA's. The 1903 report defines the Mission as 'the special contribution of the Unitarian body to social work in the city.' The report also indicates the challenge of district visiting in the wretched homes of the congested district, emphasising the missioners were trying to help, not to impose dogma but 'the religion which comes from the heart which has religion in it.' This is given as a quotation and equally could be WEAA's view

of what is meaningful religion. The Mission was predominantly Unitarian, the faith of many social reformers in the city, but it was determinedly non-denominational.

Setta was entrusted with leading a Sunday afternoon Girls' Class, diplomatically teaching 'that broad ethical platform on which all true religions, as all true humanity, meet.' She cared greatly for the girls. Additionally, she spent every Monday on house-to-house visiting of members of the Penny Book, offering practical friendship and help. The Hulme Day Nursery and the Manchester Domestic Mission made huge demands on helpers like Setta and there were always appeals for more volunteers.

The Manchester Ladies Literary Club

The renowned Manchester botanist Leopold H Grindon and his young wife, the feminist Rosa Elverson Grindon, lived at 20 Cecil Street and so became neighbours of the Axons when they moved to 6 Cecil Street in 1899. WEAA had long known Leo Grindon through the botanical and naturalist societies as well as the VS. The extraordinary Rosa must have been a delight to both WEAA and Setta with her passion for plants and Shakespeare. Like WEAA and his encouragement of window box gardening, she was not deterred by circumstances, leading a campaign for the beautifying of back yards. She even organised a performance of *Hamlet* in hers. (November 2024 saw the creation of a Rosa Grindon

mural in Platt Fields Park to celebrate her Shakespearian Garden.)

From Setta's perspective, Rosa brought her into the company of The Manchester Ladies' Literary Club, giving her the opportunity to present several papers. The society had grown from the friendly circle of women who regularly met at Rosa's home. Rosa was president. The title suggests that Manchester ladies, debarred from MLC membership despite WEAA's efforts, had decided to set up their own. The Manchester Ladies Literary Club may also have evolved from Lydia Becker's short-lived Ladies Literary Society, started in 1867 in reaction to the 'all-male ethos' of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. After Rosa's death in 1923 the Club was briefly named after her.

There are a few snippets about this intriguing organisation in local newspapers. The Club was briefly mentioned in a newspaper report on women's organisations in Manchester over the last hundred years. The Manchester Ladies Literary Club appears lightweight in comparison to the other organisations listed with their focus on women's achievements in health, sanitation, trade union movements and education, particularly in admittance to Owens:

> 'The Manchester Ladies' Literary Club, under the presidency of Mrs. Grindon, has been in existence for some years, and provides its members with a perennial feast of reason, to which, on certain occasions, their friends are also admitted. The club shows its catholicity in the choice of subjects, which are of a range wide enough to please all minds and tastes, while visits to workhouses, cottage homes, etc, prove that practice is not entirely neglected in favour of theory.'[734]

The Club enjoyed trips to the theatre, often for Shakespearean plays, and captured visiting stars as guests of the Club.

Talks were strictly limited to twenty minutes for members. Perhaps these women had endured too much in domestic roles as men held forth. Was there such a rule in the societies WEAA attended? A Mrs Lund gave a 'very crisp and chatty' paper on Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe 'though, as she rather pitifully remarked "sotto voice" twenty minutes (all the time allotted) was a brief space in which to take a person from her cradle to the grave with eighty-four years between the two events.'[735]

Only one of Setta's papers has surfaced. This was published in *The Antiquary*, the Elliot Stock journal to which WEAA was a frequent contributor. The article, *Luther's "Bible-Printer*" is a neat account of the sixteenth century printer from Hesse, Hans Luft, the 'Bibel-drucker,' famed as the first printer of the complete edition of Luther's Bible. Setta recounted that in 1534 he issued not less than 100,000 copies. She also traced his links with the exiles who smuggled polemical books representing new learning back into England. Although she makes no overt claim, Setta

added a reference to her father's cousin, the one noted in AFB as a priest and educator, 'The best- known member of the family in recent times [in Hesse] was the late Oberstudienrath Professor, Dr. J. B. Lüft, the distinguished theologian and academical reformer.'[736]

The fullest accounts of the Club and Rosa herself can be found on Charlie Hulme's invaluable John Cassidy site.[737]

A True Partnership

WEAA and Jane had worked together to promote vegetarianism, temperance, Sunday opening, and public art. Jane helped WEAA with his research and published several articles on her own account. Frail health had prevented her from developing her musical talents. The pattern continued with Setta. As well as their mutual interest in the Hulme Day Nursery and the Missions, she too was an ardent vegetarian and a scholarly helpmeet. It is not surprising that their daughter was named Dorothy, a name that was referenced in their research. In her article Setta noted that Hans Luft's wife was a Dorothea, and WEAA's paper *A Fifteenth-Century Life of St Dorothea* appeared in the same *Antiquary* issue.

Matilde Hompes gave a fond description of how her two friends spent their limited leisure time. WEAA read aloud to Setta, often in German or discussed works he had recently encountered. They took 'lovely, quiet, simple holidays together, sometimes in Germany sometimes in Wales, Scotland or in the South of England.'[738]

One result of the holidays in Germany was WEAA's paper *Notes made in Miltenberg* in the *Antiquary*, introduced rather light-heartedly as 'A recent visit to Miltenberg in Bavaria was undertaken without any archaeological purpose, but a few notes made there may not be without interest for some readers of the *Antiquary*.'[739] I asked my German friend, Ulrike Wray, for her opinion. She found the description wonderful, the whole discourse enjoyable, concluding that WEAA gives a real feel of the place. WEAA certainly delighted in the various place names like Schnatterlochtum, literally nattering-hole-tower.

Setta's sympathetic companionship spurred WEAA into an energetic period of writing and civic activity. Dorothy was included in the

circle, encouraged to enjoy her talents for sketching and scribbling. When she was seven, Florence Baird Smith thanked WEAA for relaying ‘accounts of the young maid’s beginning to follow in her father’s literary steps.’ [740]

CHAPTER 22

THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC OF MOSS SIDE

Lancashire Mosses

Ancient moss lands once carpeted North West England. Largely regarded as unproductive, these low-lying bogs were plundered for peat. Drainage and farming eroded their margins. Even Leo Grindon saw little value in these wastes apart from their bloom of cotton grass and heather. He predicted correctly that one day most would vanish.

Industry, urbanisation, and sewage conquered the mosses. Barely three percent now survives. The old radicals dreamt of co-operative schemes to colonise the soggy black soil of Salford's Chat Moss, sliced apart by Stephenson's Liverpool to Manchester Railway. One of them, Elijah Dixon, set up his Hephzibah Farm there, a fond metaphor to him of how good might be brought from waste. Now with further peat extraction banned, the restoration of Chat Moss is under way.

Moss Side Township

There was little left of the moss lands that gave Moss Side its name. WEAA described how centuries ago Moss Side bordered 'the great moss which stretched from Rusholme to Chorlton-cum-Hardy and Withington, and included parts of Heaton Moor, Old Trafford, Stretford and Barton.'[741] At some stage farming developed and this is the rural Greenheys landscape that Mrs Gaskell described in *Mary Barton*, the novel WEAA described as 'the best Manchester story that

has yet been written.'[742]

WEAA pointed out the need for a full history of Moss Side, 'The earliest mention of Moss Side is in 1533, when it contained part of the estates of the ancient family of Trafford of Trafford. It has not yet found a historian but Mr. H. T. Crofton has printed an interesting booklet and the John Owen MSS, contains varied data.'[743]

The situation has not changed. In a recent book Chris Makepeace similarly observed that 'The full story of Manchester and Moss Side has still to be written.' He also referred to the wealth of information available 'due to the avid collection and preservation of material by certain people in the late 19th and early 20th century.'[744]

Three friends, WEAA, H T Crofton, antiquarian and secretary to the Moss Side Urban District Council, and the librarian Mr Green were largely responsible for this foresight, harvesting source material for future historians. WEAA provided valuable information in his *Guardian* article on Moss Side. Most of the field names have been lost but he recorded as evidence of the vanished

district the names of Goose Lache, Briery Meadows, Rushey, and Black Ditch. His statistics are still quoted, especially the figures he gave of the population growth from 150 people in 1801 to 26,583 a hundred years later.

Moss Side was an independent township, not part of the original borough of Manchester. There was strong resistance to amalgamation with Manchester, a burning issue in the late 1890s. The best expression of local distrust is in a broadside preserved by Mr Green, a new version of *The Spider and the Fly*. The Fly rejects the tempting promises,

> 'But, dear old Mister Spider,
> You have told so many lies,
> And spread your nets so widely
> To catch us little Flies.
> …
> Avaunt, then Mister Spider!
> I have listened to your lay,
> And I have QUITE DECIDED
> "TO NOT COME IN TO-DAY"'[745]

But the spider provided many of the services Moss Side relied on, water, gas, sewerage as well as Alexandra Park, and amalgamation inevitably took place in 1904.

Neighbours

Much of the Moss Side housing, predominantly terraced, was built in the later part of the century. New regulations meant these terraces were of a better standard than poor quality housing in districts like Hulme and Chorlton-on-Medlock. Small front gardens

conferred status. The Axons found like-minded neighbours in the pleasant neighbourhoods of Derby Street and then Cecil Street. WEAA's close friend Mr Green lived first at 22 Derby Street and then moved to number 4. The journalist, temperance activist and religious poet, Henry Septimus Sutton, lived at Yarburgh Street. WEAA proved to be a great help to his widow when Sutton died in 1901.

WEAA's Political Position

In 1876 WEAA took great trouble to explain his political position to the gentlemen who had assumed he would wish to serve on the Committee of the Manchester Republican Club. WEAA responded that he could just have excused himself as not having the time, which was true as he had 'many engagements' but he wanted to clarify his thinking. In this heavily crossed out draft WEAA set out that he was not convinced that republics would deliver more freedom, and he was not prepared to throw away practical advances for theoretical visions, 'I am for reform not revolution. Instead of overturning exiting institutions I wish to see Freedom slowly broaden down from precedent to precedent. I am sorry to see gentlemen for whom I have the greatest respect wasting energy which if directed to other channels would be productive of practical beneficial results.'[746] The Manchester Republican Club appears to have

been led by Dr Pankhurst and centred on opposition to the Royal Titles Bill that endowed Queen Victoria with 'the tinsel crown' of Empress of India.[747]

WEAA was no career politician, and his crusades were motivated by social or local needs.

Moss Side Urban District Council
In 1894 changes in local government enabled Moss Side to become an urban district council with enhanced status and powers.

WEAA decided to stand as a member for the new Moss Side council to prevent one change, the Destructor, and to bring in another, Moss Side Free Library.

The Destructor
Back to *The Spider and the Fly* and the spider's poisonous offer,

'A beautiful "Destructor,"
Shall be planted at your doors,
To place your "Sanitation,"
With the City, on "All Fours."

The fly is not tricked,

'You say you'll take my Sewage,
But I'd dearly like to see
You disposing of your own
Before you deal with *me*.'

Prior to becoming an urban district council Moss Side had been loosely organised through local boards with limited powers. The Moss Side Board of Health was responsible for such matters as paving, sewerage, and building by-

laws. In 1854 Robert Rawlinson held an inquiry under the Public Health Act and ‘the sanitation of Moss Side was found to be deplorable and some of the roads terribly bad.’[748]

In 1887 the Board decided the solution for waste management must have an incinerator or destructor and they applied for government funding. They tried to keep the plans close, but rumours spread, sparking off fierce arguments. (The same debate and the same voices continue today over the use of municipal incinerators for waste disposal.) The destructor was comparatively new on the municipal scene, promoted by technocrats but generally feared by residents. Manchester, Birmingham, and Leeds had all installed A. Fryer’s ‘destructor’ as its inventor termed it in the 1876 patent. A good source for the neglected history of destructors is J F M Clark’s case study of its introduction into Torquay.[749]

The ‘No Destructor’ Campaign

In 1874 WEAA had written an extensive article on the problems of sewage disposal for the *Companion to the British Almanac*. Destructors were only just being developed

and WEAA did not mention them. His article is professionally objective, but it is clear where his sympathies lay. WEAA expressed the opinion that ‘there can be no doubt that the proper destination of all sewage is the soil ; it would then become a source of health and wealth instead of a cause of disease and death.’[750]

By January 1894 WEAA was chair of a committee of residents, attending a government board hearing on the planned destructor. A major concern raised was the proximity to the Whitworth and Alexandra parks as well as to schools and hospitals. Land had already been purchased by the old Board. Responding to a claim from an expert that the gases were pure and free of germs, a Mr Cobbett from the residents’ committee replied, ‘Then instead of going to the seaside, people should sit on top of destructor chimneys.’[751]

In the next few months WEAA investigated further. A skilled journalist, he exposed the secrecy of the old local Board, the possible corruption of vested interests and land ownership. A combination of librarian and journalist makes for a formidable adversary. WEAA also had a librarian son to help. Ernest checked out patent information for him in the collection at the Reference Library, writing to ‘My dear Pater’ that ‘Bennison’s patent for “collecting & destroying ashpit & refuse” was applied for 5 June 1894, no. 01882.’ This information was dynamite, revealing vested

interests. John Bennison of the patent, it transpired, was the chair of the old Board. His colleagues were in awe of his 'very intimate and technical knowledge,' and he had been invited to design the destructor.

A deputation of ratepayers headed by WEAA attended the meeting of the old Board on 9 July 1894. Its powers would end in November when was due to be replaced by a democratically elected Urban District Council. WEAA strongly supported postponement of the destructor scheme to enable public debate, emphasising that the 'moribund board' should not be allowed to push it through in such haste and secrecy. The *Guardian* gave extensive coverage of WEAA's speech, including his anger at the proposed site near the park and hospital, 'The idea of children and invalids basking in the sunshine and gaining health and strength from the balmy fumes of the destructor was grotesque in the extreme.'[752] WEAA's main attack was on the total lack of public consultation over such an important question as the destructor. The old Board had little choice but to agree to reconsider.

In the next few weeks WEAA stood as a candidate for the new Moss Side Urban

District Council, sharing the opposition to the destructor ticket with eleven others, 'RATEPAYERS! Will you be "Humbugged?" If not, vote for the Ratepayers' Candidates and NO DESTRUCTOR!'[753] As always, he poured all his energies into the campaign, 'Then what might be called the anti-destructor party, headed by Mr. W. E. A. Axon, flooded the whole district with their literature and instructions to voters'.[754]

He made draft election notes, with much scribbling and crossing out, fortunately preserved by the devoted Mr Green. WEAA rejoiced that Moss Side and other districts were soon to be governed through democratic suffrage and elected District Councils, commenting that the old system 'left the control of such districts in the hands of one class alone.'[755] The old Board members were all Tories.

Although unnamed it is clear from the draft notes that his are the words on the joint election flyer, with his sentiments judiciously toned down. WEAA could not resist one last shot at Bennison, with this pointed question on the flyer, 'They claim that they have been

studying the matter for six years, and in June last decided **to adopt the patent of one of their own members.** This particular patent they have since withdrawn. **Why?**'

The 'Burning Question'

WEAA was duly elected to the new Moss Side Urban District Council as a representative of the North Ward. He came third out of twenty-six candidates, with an impressive 1,374 votes. Altogether nine opponents of the destructor were elected, to take forward the 'burning question' as the *Manchester Courier* termed it. [756] The local newspapers made lively copy over WEAA's role in ensuring the voices of the opponents would not be silenced.

Years of active membership in his huge range of societies and organisations had turned WEAA into a wily strategist, not easily brow beaten or deterred by the opposition's tricks. At the very first meeting of the new Moss Side Urban District Council, he denounced the election of the chair when only a few members were present. The clerk 'was sure that the decision they had arrived at could not now be upset – Mr. Axon thought that it could.'[757]

At the next meeting, in what was headlined

as an ‘animated discussion’, WEAA challenged the coverup in the minutes, declaring ‘I am perfectly in order and will not be stopped in this disorderly manner.’[758]

A re-election was held, the same chair re-appointed and WEAA was careful not to leave any cause for resentment, ‘explaining that the reason he and the party represented opposed Dr Bailey’s election three months ago was not from any personal feeling against Dr. Bailey but because of the manner in which he was elected.’ All this may seem trivial, but WEAA was determined to stand up to underhand tactics.[759] Fortunately the disputes did not affect his friendship with the Board clerk, Mr H T Crofton. Local history, gypsy lore, folklore, and the MLC proved stronger bonds than politics.

As might be expected WEAA was assiduous in using all his contacts to further his campaign, from trustees of Whitworth Park through to Alderman Harry Rawson, always a good source for inside information. Mr Green kept the key letters and here is Harry Rawson’s advice, ‘But I fear that your crusade against the proposed Destructor won’t aid you much :

because the Sanitary Committee is, I understand, almost unanimous in favour of that method of getting rid of the thousands of tons of dry rubbish that every week produces.'[760]

The passionate debates over the destructor continued and WEAA, having established the principle of public consultation, gradually withdrew from the issue. He was already very busy with the Moss Side Free Library. He did not stand for re-election in 1897, and Mr W Cobbett became the main representative for the ratepayers on the Urban District Council. In a neat juxtaposition of his enterprises, WEAA's new Moss Side Free Library became the venue for the protest meetings of the opponents of the destructor.

In 1902 the plan for the destructor was agreed. The remaining two opponents on the Urban District Council, Mr Hynes and Mr Lees, fought bitterly to stop their names being added to the memorial tablet but they were overruled, 'the names of the protesting members will therefore be recorded on the memorial stone.'[761] The Refuse Destructor was built in the same year by the Horsfall Destructor Company of Leeds and London. Manchester was hosting the 1902 Sanitary Congress and visitors had the 'pleasure' of examining the state-of-the art construction. [762]

CHAPTER 23

A VERY HAPPY AUGURY: THE MOSS SIDE FREE LIBRARY

The History

There is probably more material on Moss Side Free Library than on any other branch library in Manchester or neighbouring townships. Not only did local newspapers, including of course the *Guardian*, cover progress, but the librarian Mr Green and WEAA both wrote pamphlets about the library and its special collections as well as preserving ephemera that can now be found in MCLA and JRL archives. The Moss Side Library reports, particularly the first one, provide a meticulous record. Yet like Moss Side itself, the library has not yet found a historian to collate the full narrative.

Unsurprisingly, the old local government board had failed to act on the poll of ratepayers in 1887 that came out in favour of a Free Library, using as an excuse 'some informality in the method of taking the poll.'[763] One of the first actions of the new Moss Side Urban District Council in January 1895 was to unanimously adopt the Public

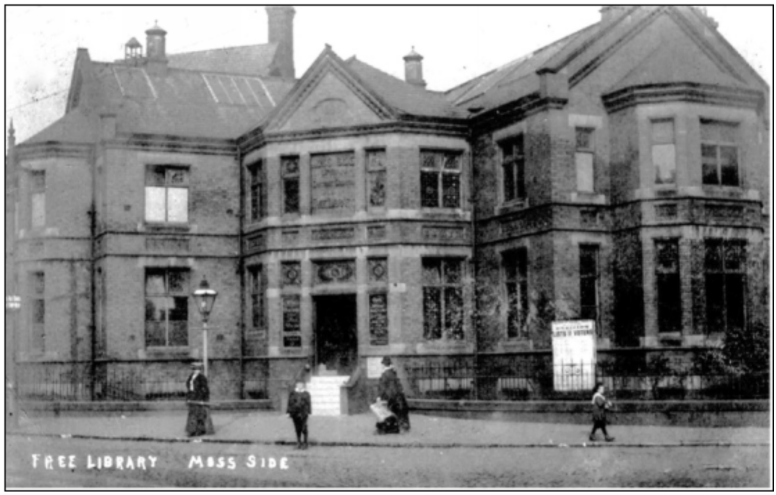
Libraries Act, as proposed by Mr. J. Williams. WEAA immediately became Chair of the Moss Side Free Libraries Sub-Committee under the General Purposes Committee. He wasted no time in getting all the plans in place and presented them in full to the District Council on 16 September 1895. Only one person tried to delay by suggesting further consultation with the ratepayers. The rest were enthusiastic and the whole scheme agreed. The Local Government Board sanctioned the loan as costed out by WEAA and on Saturday 5 September 1896, WEAA laid the foundation stone with a silver trowel, declaring the ceremony as 'a very happy augury for the district.'[764] This trowel is still in the possession of the Axon family.

In his speech he emphasised the local associations with Mrs Gaskell and Thomas De Quincey, and the plans for related collections. De Quincey's childhood, he noted, had been passed 'within a stone's throw of the library site.'[765]

The Design
The building, designed by Mr W R Acton, surveyor to the Council, was constructed on a site provided by the Council, next to their offices. The location, on the corner of Bradshaw Street and Moss Lane East, was advantageous, placing the library in a central position for the whole district.

Mr Acton was a remarkable man, serving the district for at least twenty-five years. His responsibilities encompassed schools, waste management, including the destructor, pavements, roads, the library, and tramways. WEAA's wishes for a community library were brilliantly realised by Acton's design, 'The building will consist of a basement and two storeys above ground. The basement is available for class-rooms and small meetings. The ground floor will be devoted to the reference and lending libraries and newsroom. The upper storey will consist of a large room (which can be divided when necessary) suitable for lectures, meetings, concerts, exhibitions.'[766] Contemporary photographs of

the interior and exterior show how extensive the library was, a welcoming building, constructed not for civic show but for use. The *Guardian* described it as ‘handsome’.[767]



The Moss Side Free Library was opened officially on 8 May 1897 by the Marquess of Lorne, then M.P. for South Manchester. In his speech as chair, WEAA focused on three special collections already in place. These related to the history of printing and to the two writers associated with Moss Side, Thomas De Quincey, and Mrs Gaskell. WEAA neatly brought it all together as he ‘referred to the opening chapter of *Mary Barton*, which contains a description of the land on which the library stands.’[768]

The Librarian: Mr John Albert Green
In 1897 ninety-eight candidates applied for the position of librarian at the Moss Side Branch. The committee selected a Mr John Albert Green, librarian at the Heywood Cooperative Society. This was a momentous choice, both for Moss Side and WEAA.

WEAA already had a vision for the Moss Side library. It was to be both a centre for the local community and a showcase for the special collections related to the area. Mr Green instantly empathised with these aims, becoming WEAA's devoted champion and friend. They bonded over the development of both community and bibliographic enterprises. Ironically it is Mr Green who is remembered for the special collections and WEAA's part is largely forgotten. Mr Green who carefully tried to capture all the scraps he could relating to WEAA would have been distressed at this.

There are twenty-two letters in AP from Mr Green to WEAA, starting in 1900, and in all of them he sounds happy, busy, and zealous. Like WEAA Mr Green was a vegetarian and teetotaller but unlike WEAA he was attracted to spiritualism. Mr Green wrote fondly of a joint London trip and of the VS summer school they both enjoyed at Melrose. As neighbours in Moss Side, the families became intimate. Mr Green referred to Ernest as 'our prize humourist' and one of the several female library assistants at Moss Side, Miss Gertrude Green, was surely his daughter. The details of the letters evidence a close sharing of interests.

What was Mr Green's background? Something can be learnt from the printed testimonials included in Mr Green's application for a library post in Heywood. There is also a summary note of his career, preserved with other papers at MCLA. He was born in 1858, the son of a builder in Heywood, worked as an office boy for the *Heywood Guardian* and in the shop of the Heywood Bookselling Co., before

becoming librarian for the Heywood Cooperative Society.

Mr Green's brief recollections of his early life are also amongst his papers at MCLA. Sixth of eleven children he left National School before thirteen and was educated after that through 'self-culture,' 'My father possessed a good many books and from my earliest years I was accustomed to handling them. This early habit or trait has clung to me ever since.'

He wrote a great deal of his gratitude to his 'lady manageress' at the bookshop, a Miss Marsh, 'I was encouraged to read and to read the best books which were available in the local libraries. Miss Marsh, the lady referred to, was Manchester bred, and it is to her kindly direction that I owe whatever skill I may have acquired in the knowledge of books.' Miss Marsh kept a commonplace book, an example Mr Green followed for the rest of his life. The preservation of WEAA and local history material owe much to Miss Marsh.

Like WEAA, Mr Green wanted others to share his enthusiasm for reading and to have access to material. In one letter to WEAA he reminisced happily about his efforts as a boy to set up a lending book club amongst his friends, 'I made out library cards written in violet ink. I am sorry to say that this little venture was not a success – killed for want of pence!'

No wonder they were soulmates.

The Library Stock

Funds for the library were very limited as a small district could raise little via the penny rate. WEAA had outlined this at the start, 'The penny library rate, which the Council are empowered to levy, will not produce more than £420 a year, and, as out of this, provision must made for the repayment of the loan, and payment for newspapers, periodicals, rates,

taxes, salaries, and services.' [769]

WEAA was a seasoned fund raiser, both for individuals and causes. He appealed for donations for the Moss Side Library, and these formed a quarter of the initial book stock of around 4000 volumes. The District Council used the occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee for an ambitious appeal to buy land for a recreational ground. Only £206 was raised and as this was insufficient £168 was given instead to the library, providing another 1030 volumes.

The Spider takes the Fly
Around 1900 a body of Moss Side residents petitioned for amalgamation with Manchester. The pros and cons were fiercely debated. WEAA's opinion has not been noted but his silence probably denoted acceptance of the inevitable as well as of the benefits only Manchester could provide.

A Mr Swales, an amalgamation candidate in the council elections, declared that amongst other advantages, 'If they amalgamated, they would have swimming baths, which were much needed, and free libraries. Though the latter they had, it was true, but it was only an apology for library.'[770]

This was rather unfair. The book stock may only have numbered 8,923 volumes in 1904, the year of amalgamation, but it supported an impressive number of borrowers and activities, more than 8000 tickets having been issued. But there was no denying that there any future expansion would depend on becoming part of Manchester's extensive municipal library network.

Handsome as the library building was it was indebted to the tune of £3479 when Manchester took over.

Special Collections
WEAA's mentor, Andrea Crestadoro, had taken pride in ensuring Manchester Free Libraries had both bibliographic treasures and

items of local interest in the collections. WEAA had the same ambitions for Moss Side. He recognised there could be no budget for special collections but was confident he could persuade people to contribute items or funds.

He and Mr Green succeeded in building up the collections of the Gaskell and De Quincey material that are now in MCL. In 1903 a local Brontë enthusiast, Joseph James Gleave, gave them his private collection of works, biographies, pamphlets, and boxes of cuttings. WEAA and Mr Green added further material, and Mr Green produced a catalogue in 1907, updated in 1916, as well as handlists of the Gaskell collection.

There was a third collection, mainly donated by a Dr Copinger, presumably Walter Arthur Copinger, professor of Law at Owens, antiquary and bibliographer. The collection illustrated the history of printing and included various curiosities.

WEAA and Mr Green also focused on local history, very much as a modern branch librarian might do. They called on readers to help. Donations flooded in of books, pamphlets, maps, scrapbooks, photographs, pictures, memoirs, annual reports of societies, and church magazines. MCLA's photograph of Mr Green at the library counter shows a rich and welcoming place, bright with aspidistras and flowering plants, the back wall arrayed with framed pictures and maps. It is tempting to try to identify some of these pictures, such as *A view of Greenheys, 1827* by John Ralston, from the list Mr Green provided in a newspaper letter appealing for 'local memorials.' [771] Another MCLA photograph

shows Mr Green surrounded by his all-female team of young assistants. Contrary to the usual myth of stern spinster, they look kind and welcoming.

Help from the Gaskell Family

Much has been written on the history of these collections. The most valuable is an article by Christine Lingard, expert both on the Gaskells and Manchester.[772]

Mr Green and WEAA were busily engaged in these enterprises and sympathetic friends like Charles Sutton also joined in the quests. As well as the tracking down works, ephemera, letters, and objects, WEAA and Mr Green sought the help of the Misses Gaskell. Margaret Emily (Meta), Mrs Gaskell's second daughter, and Julia Bradford, her fourth daughter. These two unmarried daughters had cared for their father, enabling to fulfil his active role as Unitarian minister of Cross Street Chapel, until his death in 1884. They remained at the house on Plymouth Grove, now wonderfully restored by the Elizabeth Gaskell Society.

WEAA and Meta Gaskell were good friends as the letters in AP reveal, finding comfort in the sharing of sorrows and tribulations. Julia was a friend but left the correspondence with WEAA to Meta. Meta was a fine artist too, another bond with WEAA.

There are forty-eight letters from Meta, dated between 1885 and 1913. WEAA was a welcome visitor, both to the home on Plymouth Grove and to their magical rustic retreat, The Sheiling, at Silverdale. (I was fortunate to be invited in by the current owner, and it really seems to be a place

suspended in time. Easy to picture WEAA, Prince Kropotkin, or other distinguished visitors entranced by the fairy tale cottage and secluded gardens that greeted them after an arduous ascent up the wooded slope.) The AP letters begin with WEAA and his daughter, most likely Sophie, being invited to tea. They commiserated when Jane and then Kitty died: they had greatly admired Kitty. They equally welcomed his second family, Setta and Dorothy. The compiler of *Letters of Mrs Gaskell's Daughters* found Meta's sympathy at Jane's death perhaps 'a little excessive'[773] given his rapid second marriage: as described previously, this was not how WEAA's contemporaries perceived it.

There is intriguing AP correspondence with Meta on the topic of Moss Side Library. WEAA clearly had to be a delicate negotiator. Grateful as they were for WEAA proposing his 'most kind thought and plan of commemorating my darling Mother,' the Misses Gaskell were nearly persuaded by 'two representative men, on whose judgement we can rely' that the Whitworth rather than Moss Side Free Library should house the collection. 'As the older of the two men we consulted

said, “If you could always have a Mr. Axon, it would be different.”’[774] Meta felt even if the Whitworth turned them down, something more central would be preferable. Fortunately, WEAA persuaded them to disregard this rather underhand advice and to gift the collection to Moss Side.

WEAA and Ernest Axon published the *Gaskell Bibliography* in 1894-5, first in the MLC Papers and then reprinted by John Heywood as a pamphlet. Although no mention is made of the Moss Side enterprise, WEAA proudly pointed out that nearly all the entries ‘have been described from personal examination.’[775] WEAA acknowledged that the list was ‘probably still incomplete, but it is hoped thar nothing of considerable importance has escaped notice.’[776] The pamphlet provided the initial guide for collecting material. Mr Green produced *A Hand-List of the Gaskell Collection* in 1903, covering the expanded collection, receiving thanks from the Misses Gaskell. Mr Green gave a detailed background in his talk in 1904 to the Liverpool librarians, reproduced in the *Manchester City News.*[777] He asked for help in solving some remaining puzzles and paid tribute to WEAA who had

collected, and donated most of the works, as well as to the financial assistance of the two Misses Gaskell.

The letters show the Misses Gaskell regularly visited WEAA and Mr Green at the Moss Side Library. The sisters' attendance at the opening ceremony was noted in the *Guardian* account[778] and was a cause of local pride.

Wild Genius

It is no surprise that WEAA and Mr Green revered Mrs Gaskell; it would almost be heretical in Manchester to do otherwise. But WEAA's and Mr Green's devotion to the erratic, paradoxical and addicted Thomas De Quincey with his ultra conservative politics, redeemed in part by being a fervent abolitionist, needs some explaining.

WEAA and his literary friends, often from strict non-conformist households, could not help admiring such romantic figures as Byron, Coleridge, and De Quincey, excusing as best they could their dubious lifestyles. Genius meant more unfortunate characteristics could be overlooked – in certain cases. WEAA might condemn John Collier, aka Tim Bobbin, for he saw nothing to redeem the brutal coarseness of his art and writing but Byron, Coleridge and De Quincey were different. Mr Green particularly admired Coleridge, eventually leaving his private collection to MCL.

Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859)

The association with Manchester naturally led to De Quincey's being generally regarded there in a favourable light. Not all could stomach him: Richard Christie of Owens, welcomed the updates on Moss Side Library but did not share WEAA's enthusiasm for De Quincey: disliking his irresponsibility for his family, he regarded him as a humbug.

De Quincey was born in the old city centre

although it was uncertain whether the Prince's Tavern or the Shakespere Hotel or some other building had the honour to be the location. The family moved soon after his birth to a country house called The Farm in Moss Side, then to a larger house, Greenhay, on the edge of Hulme. The house gave its name to the district Greenheys. After his father's death in 1793, the family left Manchester. Greenhay was demolished in the mid nineteenth century. De Quincey's later reluctant attendance at Manchester Grammar School and more particularly his escape from it, became famous from his account in *Opium Eater*.[779]

Literary romance gilded De Quincey, spelling a glamour that entranced respectable young men. WEAA, Mr Green, and Charles Sutton all fell under the De Quincey spell, and he was indeed a fantastical genius whose unsurpassed writing has influenced major literary figures ever since. He was also accessible through the many journals he contributed to, from liberal to conservative publications like *Blackwood's*. De Quincey may have driven editors to distraction by his failures to deliver but he was the rock star of such media. It is generally accepted that his essay *On Murder Considered*

as One of the Fine Arts has never been surpassed in English prose literature.

WEAA prized De Quincey's remarkable genius, his complexities, and brilliant satirical humour, writing about him both in *Lancashire Gleanings* and in *Echoes of Old Lancashire*. WEAA made further references to De Quincey in other articles and *N&Q* entries. De Quincey was firmly placed in his Pantheon of literary divinities.

Mr Green's discussions with WEAA are rich in considered comment. In one letter, despite being in the midst of electricians, painters, and the recycling of the Bronte case as 'just the thing' for the De Quincey collection, Green analyses the impact of poverty on De Quincey, comparing the value of his 'divergent writing' over the 'comfortable writing' of one of his affluent critics, the essayist Bryan Waller Procter, 'Procter's book is an example of the cold steady writing which is sure of its reward. Its tone is very proper and puts you in mind of those whom Harriet Martineau railed against.'[780]
Mr Green's description of the De Quincey collection in his pamphlet on Moss Side Free

Library[781] included a mention of WEAA's talk on the subject at the 1899 Annual Meeting of the LA in Manchester. There were 279 items at this stage, several of them rare, and again 'For this completeness the Library is chiefly indebted to Mr. W. E. A. Axon, who has in this, as in the other collections, shown the greatest interest.'

As well as text, De Quincey's Manchester admirers wanted images. There was great excitement when Charles Sutton discovered a silhouette of a young De Quincey since all the other known portraits depicted him at sixty years old or more. Although his family, it appears from the AP letters, had a miniature of him at seventeen. Mr Green wrote a pamphlet on the portraits of De Quincey, updating it with Sutton's news and the wry comment, 'No sooner is a bibliography published than something turns up and makes it incomplete.'[782]

There are several references in Mr Green's pamphlet to copies of busts and portraits being presented to the Moss Side Library. He described how WEAA had enabled James Archer's portrait of one of Manchester's 'most distinguished sons' to hang in the Art Gallery, realising 'a long cherished dream' for the artist. The Art Gallery Committee presented a photograph to the Moss Side Library. WEAA and Mr Green expressed gratitude to De Quincey's daughters and granddaughters for their gifted copies of portraits.

In 1904 the renowned Manchester sculptor John Cassidy presented a plaster version of his bronze bust of De Quincey to the Moss Side Library. This was illustrated in the *Guardian*.[783] According to Charlie Hulme, creator of the John Cassidy website, Cassidy also freely gave the Moss Side Library a small plaster model of *Adrift*, the stunning statue that now is located outside the Manchester Central Library.[784]

Help from the De Quincey Family
With the same tact and delicacy, he employed with the Misses Gaskells, WEAA earned the trust of De Quincey's daughters and granddaughter.

WEAA's approaches to De Quincey's family were fielded by his daughter Florence J Baird Smith. From the age of ten until her marriage she had worked closely with her father and was the main spokesperson for his literary estate. WEAA's proposal for the Moss Side Library collection was received joyfully. Dr Garnett of the BML had called her attention to 'the very interesting proposal for the pleasure and the improvement of the people of the Moss Side district of Manchester.'[785]

A rapid friendship ensued with exchanges of family news as well as co-operation over the

De Quincey collection. Florence enjoyed anecdotes of Dorothy, the ‘wee girlie’ or ‘the dear little girlie’ as she called her. A De Quincey scholar would find much of interest in her twenty letters to WEAA with ‘chit-chat’[786] about her father, such as her father’s ‘poor pot boiler of a Wallachmor,’[787] his relationship with James Hogg, and her own opinion of editions of his works. Yet these letters and the Moss Side collection have been overlooked in recent studies of De Quincey.

Florence, her daughters, and her sister Emily proved generous benefactors and Florence expressed regret that they could not attend the official opening ceremony for her health was failing. Apparently, they never did visit, but Florence wrote, ‘you are the Moss Side District and Committee and Council all in one indeed Manchester to me.’[788] At least WEAA managed to visit them in London.

Florence’s letters date from 1896 to 1901 and become increasingly difficult to read as illness impacted on an already scrawled handwriting. She sounds a strong and bright woman, and it is good to know that De Quincey daughters, Margaret, Florence, and Emily, were fierce

supporters of women's rights, condemning their father's dismissal of women as inferior, even though he depended on his daughters for his own survival. Letters written to one of his fans, Francis Jacox, reveal Florence's anger as a girl at tyrannical men like Milton, James Taylor, St Paul, Jacox himself, and 'Papa'.[789] The sisters plotted revolution in their bedroom. WEAA's respect for women as intellectual equals must have made a pleasant change. Even so Florence loved De Quincey as a tender father who delighted in his children, encouraged their powers, and gave them companionship. The dark side of how they suffered from his poverty, flights from bailiffs, addiction and despair, the nightmares of his paranoia, was not mentioned. Her dry summary of life with De Quincey is a joy, '"He was not a reassuring man for nervous people to live with," Florence remarked mildly.'[790]

Florence died in 1903 and the *Guardian* ensured the death was reported, 'The daughter of Thomas de Quincey and the widow of the gallant soldier who planned the siege of Delhi, and who in the darkest days of the Indian Mutiny never lost either hope or courage, has many claims to remembrance.'[791] Baird Smith

was the officer deemed by Meta Gaskell to have ‘acted most nobly.’[792] It is almost certain WEAA wrote the article with all its unusual detail of the De Quincey family and the quotations from Florence. There is a reference to her father that acknowledges that his life was largely beyond the comprehension of his later admirers, ‘The fine features of Mrs. Baird Smith, fittingly recorded in Richmond’s portrait of her, reminded those who saw her of her father’s face, but were softened and womanly, and without that weird look that he had brought from the land of his visions’.

Her daughter, Florence M Bairdsmith, continued the correspondence with WEAA and the family remained appreciative of WEAA’s fascination of their remarkable forebear.

Setta’s Contribution

Without Mathilde Hompes Setta’s part in the initial stages of Moss Side Library would be entirely forgotten. Her patience in having her house stacked with boxes is remarkable. Preparing the slips for their contents might not have been wholly altruistic as they would of course have expediated removal. Setta was a clever lady:

> ‘It is perhaps not known to many that Dr. Axon, while living in Moss Side, was mainly instrumental in establishing the Moss Side Free Library. While this movement was in progress and before the building was ready, some thousands of

> books were obtained and housed temporarily at Dr. Axon's residence: and Mrs. Axon carefully went through the tedious task of writing many of the catalogue stock slips for the books, so that they were ready to place on the library shelves. Thus was she ever ready to do the nearest thing at hand, which might prove a boon to others.'[793]

Hub of Activity
Public libraries in modern Britain have positioned themselves as community hubs, both in a bid for survival and in a recognition of the drastic need for such provision.

WEAA and Mr Green were startlingly ahead of all this. It was customary for the Free Libraries to hold lectures, exhibitions, and to provide for those with special needs such as blind readers. Manchester led the way in having reading rooms for boys. WEAA went further in querying the lack of provision for girls. In 1887 he made notes on library topics on the back of an AP letter, including 'Boys rooms – why not girls?'[794] The Boys' Rooms must have changed to Children's Rooms by 1909 when WEAA's friend Sir William Bailey described a visit to a Manchester library in his inaugural address as President of the LA. He recalled his visits to the great libraries and

cities of Europe and then added:

> ‘But all these great pleasures, all the treasures of memory fade when compared to the delight I had one cold winter’s night when visiting, with a friend, several special rooms devoted to little children in the working-class districts of Manchester. It was Sunday, and the severe winter night dramatically intensified the comfort of the warm, well-lighted rooms. Little children were seated at tables, reading “Pilgrim’s Progress,” fairy tales, and looking at picture-books.’ [795]

The Moss Side Free Library outshone them all with its range of activities as revealed through the notices and programmes that Mr Green preserved.[796] There were free cookery lectures, gas exhibitions, ‘Save Half Your Gas Bills’, demonstrations of a new cooker, subscription balls, concerts, piano recitals, music hall stars ‘Jack Myles The Triumphant Talkative Terror,’ and the Moss Side Chess Club hosted social smokers as well as ‘Simultaneous Exhibition of Chess Play by Dr. E. Lasker, Ph.D. (The World’s Champion). The Cookery Lectures ended with a Complete

Dinner being served, and a final class for of 'Fish Balls. Swiss Roll. Chocolate Meringue Tartlets.'
The proceeds of the concert held on 17 December 1901 were devoted to the purchase of books for the library. There were many performers with high culture and sentimental ballads mixed with 'ventriloquial entertainment.' Given the rooms were also used for campaigns and ratepayers' meetings, the Moss Side Free Library was an exciting venue even if the book stock were limited. The large room on the upper floor was reserved for renting out in the evening, raising much needed funds. But this did deprive the readers of the 'one room which was spacious and well lighted by day.'[797] Newspaper readers were crammed into a corner downstairs.

Mr Green and WEAA produced the *Moss Side Public Library Magazine*, copies of which Mr Green carefully preserved. These and the ephemera from the library's events are rare finds in library history. The first issue of the *Moss Side Public Library Magazine* appeared in October 1897. The contents are fascinating and colourful, full of local advertising which presumably supported production costs. The

magazine must have been a joy to read for both sophisticated and basic readers. In the first issue there are book lists, the first of a series of extracts from popular novels, Conan Doyle's *Brigadier Gerard*, and a *Notes and News* page. The magazine was refreshingly free of any mention of library rules, rebukes or fines, and the editor eagerly shared his plans for future issues such as competitions for the young, books on special subjects, local history and notices of recitations and readings, 'There will be other Features which, we hope will enable us to make the Magazine a distinct success.'

When Moss Side Library moved under Manchester's control the first change was the conversion of the large room on the upper floor into a newsroom, enabling the library on the ground floor to be extended. Sensible enough but it meant the end of the entertainments. Whilst recognising the value of the De Quincey and Gaskell collections, the Manchester Library Committee found the main stock was poor as 'it had suffered from having an inadequate income' and had to be replaced 'to bring it in line with the other branch libraries.'[798]

Mr Green remained as Moss Side until 1916 when he together with the Moss Side special collections were moved to MCL. Ernest recollected that Mr Green was not entirely happy, ‘Mr. Green has left Moss Side and is now at the Reference Library. It is a promotion but somehow he does not seem to like it as well as being at the Branch.’ [799] WEAA and Mr Green had shared an idyllic period of comradeship, community librarianship and scholarly enterprise in their Moss Side kingdom.

CHAPTER 24

THE REPUBLIC OF LETTERS

Writing as a Trade

WEAA was frequently asked for advice on writing as a career. Worried parents, desperate denizens of New Grub Street, aspiring citizens of the Republic of Letters, as James Leatham termed it, and miscellaneous young hopefuls sent in pleas for his judgement, often accompanied by precious manuscripts. WEAA did not offer false hope or mince his words. His tough attitude offers a glimpse of the hard struggles he had endured, the fatigue of a jobbing writer.

There is a draft of one letter to an aspiring playwright that reveals much of WEAA's own approach. The correspondent had sent WEAA his play. With brutal honesty, WEAA told him he would not find a manager to stage it, analysed its defects of plot and character, and the 'fatal blemish.' The blemish is that the play is derivative and 'second hand', that is not written from direct experience or thoughts. WEAA discouraged the correspondent, feeling there was little evidence of literary gifts. To soften the harsh judgement, WEAA added that if he were to try again, he should use his own powers of observation, 'There is no intuition in literature – all satisfactory work is based upon knowledge.' He recommended him to look at the life around him in Stalybridge, 'There is plenty of pathos & tragedy & humour in the daily life of any great town, and you can draw direct from nature.'

WEAA ended with a heartfelt plea, 'Further I would ask you to consider well the dangers and disappointments of those who adopt the profession of letters. Those are happiest to whom literature is a recreation and not a trade.'[800]

Memoirs

Not all the would-be authors were young. Poverty and old age drove some to consider whether money could be made from memoirs. Henry Septimus Sutton, poet, journalist, and once editor of *Meliora* and *Alliance News* was now struggling on half pay from the UK Alliance. In 1899 he contacted WEAA confidentially for advice, 'It has recently occurred to me that the writing of septuagenarian reminiscences is both very fashionable & seems to be lucrative as well.'[801] WEAA tried to help as he greatly admired Sutton as a poet. He sent Sutton's sample pages to the *Guardia*n but the 'unlucky paper' as Sutton called it, was declined, perhaps not helped by Sutton's coyness over his identity.[802] Sutton died in 1901 and WEAA was plunged into the usual morass of trying to help the family, in this case, petitioning for a Civil List pension.

WEAA was too private to write his own memoirs. In any case his sights were set on the curiosities of the external world, not on himself. He did continue to write biographies for others, including the substantial *William Harrison Ainsworth, A Memoir*, published in

1902. [803] WEAA's volume was commissioned to accompany the Windsor edition of the Harrison Ainsworth novels, reprinted with the original Cruikshank illustrations. This was a bold endeavour given that he and several other once popular mid-Victorian novelists, had fallen out of favour, 'It was upon Lever, James, Disraeli, Lytton, Trollope and Harrison Ainsworth that the blows of the critics rained most heavily.' [804] WEAA was the perfect chronicler, and his biography was well received as were the reprints.

Demands

WEAA was simultaneously journalist, writer, reformer, family, and society man, 'one of the busiest men in Manchester' as Samuel Laycock termed him.[805] His role as a *Guardian* reviewer generated many personal requests from authors as well as complaints if their works were not selected or praised.

As ever he was the one who would organise raising funds for friends in distress, their widows, and children.

In this later period Mrs Sutton, William Andrews, James Turner, and Alfred Arthur Reade all asked for and received his help. Arthur Reade, a curious and difficult character, heartily joined in the charitable

efforts WEAA was making on his behalf by sending WEAA a list of targets, 'They are all swimming in money.'[806] In 1911 Reade was enraged by WEAA's opposition to licenses for theatre bars, a very controversial issue in Manchester. Ernest's anger is apparent in the note he added to Reade's outrageous letter to his father, 'This is the fellow for whom WEAA twice sent round the hat. He was editor of "Business" at this time.'[807]

WEAA also assisted Reade in a very odd literary enterprise. Reade had an enterprising career as a Manchester journalist, a Paris correspondent in the 1870s, a publisher, and was a fanatical pioneer of savings and life insurance. He was fascinated too by the practicalities of English composition, and by the pros and cons of stimulants. In 1883 he produced an intriguing book, *Study and Stimulants; or, The use of intoxicants and narcotics in relation to intellectual life, as illustrated by personal communications on the subject, from men of letters and science*.[808] In the preface he acknowledges WEAA's 'suggestive and much appreciated help.' The collection of over a hundred responses he received from writers ranging from Darwin to

Turgenev (who rather masks the truth of his indulgences) is enthralling.

WEAA was quick to offer practical support when friends suffered disaster. Even in the middle of his own crisis in 1905, WEAA organised fund raising for Henry Pitman. When George Milner's arm was amputated after a shooting incident in Achill Island. WEAA like other MLC comrades gathered around to encourage their President's recovery.

There were non-literary incidents too. His friend Thomas Armstrong recalled the occasion when he and WEAA went to an Open-Air Meeting at Angel Meadow and were badgered by a desperate man pleading for a friend sentenced to death for the murder of his wife. Few would have stopped for a total stranger, 'a poor fellow' in such a notorious district but WEAA and Armstrong became involved, helped to get the sentence reduced to life imprisonment, and kept in touch with the family.[809] Good Samaritans indeed.

Sussex and Lancashire

Paid commissions from publishers brought only limited financial rewards. It is unlikely that WEAA's later works such as *Bygone Sussex,* published by William Andrews in 1896, sold as many copies as the popular *Annals of Manchester*. William Andrews grumbled in May 1897[810] that sales were on

the low side. Even allowing for typical publisher's pessimism, William Andrews was probably right when he considered such works to be amongst 'books that are doubtful.'[811]

Yet one reviewer recognised that in *Bygone Sussex* WEAA was attempting something different from the 'old-fashioned historian's way, the conglomeration of a series of dates and events.'[812] The reviewer praised WEAA's approach of devoting each chapter to a particular topic and noted that WEAA's light, concise style produced a readable text rich in history and 'gleanings.' This unusually long review contained several extracts from the text, and information, not apparent in the book itself, that several of the illustrations were by Raffles Davison.

C P Scott had gracefully accepted the dedication of *Bygone Sussex*, surprised to discover WEAA's interest in a southern county but expecting it to be all the 'breezier' for the holiday associations.[813] When he received a copy a few weeks later he described the book as 'very handsome and is full of pleasant and suggestive reading-the air of holidays seems to hover round it and it will send a good many of

your readers I should think to visit your own favourable haunts.'

I can attest that *Bygone Sussex* is still a pleasant companion. Carrying it around on my own explorations, the chapters with their specific focus and historical connections led me to surprising places like the Miller's Tomb, Old Humphrey's Grave, the churches, fountains, and waterworks of Poynings, Fulking, and Edburton, associated with Ruskin. There is a feeling of being on a pilgrimage rather than a tour.

When WEAA proposed a book on Lancashire lore William Andrews responded that he could not pay out more than £10 and WEAA was welcome to try elsewhere. He may also having been taking out his temper on WEAA for in the same letter he complains, 'By the way, Can you tell me why such a dead set is made against my publications in the Manchester Guardian?' In fact, William Andrews had conveniently forgotten that he had suggested both the *Bygone Sussex* book, as he heard WEAA had so much material, and the Lancashire lore book. After much debate over the title this was finally published as *Echoes of*

Old Lancashire in 1899.[814] Relations with publishers were never easy. The book earned WEAA another extensive and favourable review, this time in the *Wigan Observer*. His 'graceful dedication' to their Earl of Crawford and the several references to their neighbourhood went down well.[815] It is a fascinating mixed bag of some of WEAA's best essays. WEAA was conscious of the oddity that modern topics were mingled with the antiquarian; he justified it on the grounds that changes have been so rapid, 'that many things have become obsolete in the life time of the existing generation.'

Miscellany

Publishers and editors continued to approach WEAA for contributions. He updated his article on Manchester and produced a new one on Stockport for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, wrote essays for several of William Andrews' anthologies, and entries on Brierley, Laycock and Waugh in Andrews' *Northern Poetry 2*. From references in AP, he might well have also written on temperance, Shakers, Quakers, and William Roscoe for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. He produced articles for Dr Kellogg, for Andrews' planned *The*

Encyclopaedia of Out-of-the-way Knowledge,[816] and accepted some work from Robert Palgrave.[817] All or most of such work earned him fees.[818] William Andrews wanted his ideas for a project, *The Growth of England*, and felt WEAA's suggestions were better than his own.

There were disappointments too when circumstances intervened to prevent publication. This happened with one of his dearest projects, a life of Luigi Cornaro, apostle of the temperate life. Dr Kellogg was eager to publish this work, and the prospect was widely welcomed by vegetarians and scholars alike. WEAA sent in the MS, receiving the unusual comment from the assistant editor Mrs Rossiter that she disliked the modernisation. WEAA was devastated when Dr Kellogg dropped the plan after the disastrous fire and ensuing financial crisis at his Battle Creek Sanatorium in 1902. Dr Kellogg also acknowledged he could no longer pay proper fees for WEAA's articles, adding the sanctimonious comment, 'but I know you are not writing for money but for the good of the common cause for which we are all working.' [819]

Library journals in both in the USA and at home continued to welcome his input with occasional reservations. Alfred Pollard, editor of the Bibliographical Society's journal, *The Library*, became restive about WEAA's topics. Comments such as 'Can't you think of something brighter'[820] become more frequent until even the equitable WEAA became exasperated by Pollard's carping.

Rejections may have been few, but the pattern suggests that some of WEAA's articles were regarded as either too esoteric or rather old-fashioned. H A Wilson, editor of the *Journal of Theological Studies*, declined WEAA's *Some Analogues of the Syriac Apocryph of Aphikia* on the grounds that, although he had read it with much interest, 'its importance for the purposes of the journal is hardly such as to warrant me in accepting it.' [821]

Old Topics

Following a very pleasant visit to Manchester, Andrews wrote to WEAA on 6 September 1899 to discuss future ventures. He mentioned that *Echoes* was getting good responses. He then added, 'Can you send me a copy of your Gossip about Manchester. I read it in the Free Library & enjoyed it very much and I may get

up a lecture on Hull on similar lines.'[822]

If Andrews had not referred to this work, WEAA would never be known as its author. It is a thirty-two-page pamphlet, published as one of Abel Heywood's penny guides, packed with advertisements, dense text, and numerous illustrations. The BL copy is dated 1888 and noted as 'signed by A.' [823] The text is very much in WEAA's narrative/antiquarian style, encompassing people, publications and places that populated his imaginative world. He included the printing office of Wilmot Henry Jones where P J Bailey's *Festus* was first published, De Quincey's schoolmaster, Charles Lawson, Shudehill, Ancoats Hall where the Manchester Art Museum was now placed, the eccentric Rev. Joshua Brooks of the Collegiate Church who appeared as a character in Mrs Bank's *The Manchester Man,* and even an illustration of Smithy Door. The reader really feels as if they are sharing a walk and conversations with the author, seeing the vanished city in the new. It is no surprise to find at the end that much of the text is based on lectures 'frequently delivered to popular audiences.' WEAA would have been an enthralling speaker on a subject that he loved

and knew so well.

WEAA also produced a much more pedestrian *Guide to Manchester, its Public Buildings, Places of Resort &c., &c.* for Abel Heywood's Penny Guides series. For twopence you could have a plan of the town as well, and for threepence an elaborate map. It is anonymous and undated, but the copy in with other WEAA material at MCLA, gives his name as a pencil note. The information in the guide suggests it probably dates from the 1880s. Again, kept with other WEAA pamphlets in an archive box at MCLA, is John Heywood's penny *Pocket Guide to Blackpool and Fleetwood*, written very much in WEAA's style with literary quotations, poems, clear information, and a half dialect tale of a haunted house that isn't. Undated and anonymous, but all the indications are it is by WEAA.

On 25 September 1899 WEAA drafted a reply to Andrews, responding to his request for advice on a Lancashire book. WEAA considered that Charles Sutton would not be interested as his main interests were biographical, focused on *DNB*. Instead WEAA suggested a John Mortimer who wrote pieces

for the *Manchester City News*, the MLC, and was engaged for years on producing trade volumes for his firm, Henry Macnamera & Co., a series that was now complete. WEAA was sure Mortimer had enough material from weekend rambles for 'an attractive book on Lancashire & Cheshire.' WEAA's recommendation of a 'charming writer' shows how well he had his finger on the pulse of the Manchester literary scene. Then WEAA continues to outline his own plans for the new volume of *Annals,* which has been 'practically concluded.'

Next follows a unique glimpse of WEAA's literary hopes. He admits he is reluctant to take on any new enterprises of a serious nature whilst he is engaged with *Annals*. Instead, he has turned to his accumulation of research, 'I have a strong desire to utilise as far as possible what I have by me – the accumulation of thirty years of active literary work. If any of these would suit you or if you can help me to dispose of them I should be very glad.'

WEAA offers five works: the first an updated life of Cagliostro. His *Cagliostro*, as it first

appeared in the Dublin University Magazine was, WEAA claimed, 'the fullest account of this remarkable character that has ever been written, and contains a hoard of details not mentioned by Carlyle.' Next, he proposed a volume of literary and folk-lore essays, a collection of Italian literary subjects, and 'a small hoard of oriental tales', including the challenging *The Reward of Talent*, 'A man is sometimes a very bad judge of his own work, but I confess to a liking for this.' The fifth work was *Shadows of Old Manchester*, 'similar to Echoes but entirely relating to Manchester.'

He added that the *Growth of England*, as mooted by Andrews for a collaboration, 'attracts me very much.'[824] WEAA comes across as fully confident in what he can offer as a writer, able to accept criticism and to bounce up with more ideas.

Andrews responded to all the suggestions. He perceptively saw folklore studies as a possible but not mixed up with literature, 'You must appeal to one class of readers,'[825] and *Shadows of Old Manchester* was a possible winner although he was disappointed sales of *Echoes* had slowed down.

Although WEAA's beloved *Cagliostro* was never published as a book, the other ideas emerged as articles and pamphlets.

New Directions

Despite criticism of his old-fashioned topics, WEAA was breaking new ground in this period with his fresh interests in Tolstoy, Gypsy studies, and Welsh literature, extending his skills as a translator into the rarer territories of Romany, Welsh, and Arabic. Who but WEAA would think of translating a quatrain from the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* into English Romani or be capable of doing so? Bob Forrest, a Rubaiyat expert, gives a fascinating account of WEAA's joint venture with H T Crofton, 'Their translation was originally published in *The Manchester Quarterly* in July 1899 and subsequently as a slim pamphlet of only four pages, titled Homer Tankeromengo dré Rómanes, published in Manchester in 1899, three years before JS's more extensive Welsh Romany version.'[826] JS was John Sampson, an obsessive Romani philologist, and Forrest explores the notion that JS had been rather jealous of WEAA and Crofton's initiative. Forrest also usefully lists WEAA's gypsy papers published in the *Antiquary*, *N&Q*,

and the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*. WEAA's *Romany Songs Englished* include his translations from Russia, Spain, and Transylvania.

WEAA also became an expert on Edward Fitzgerald himself, the poet who had freely adapted and popularised the *Rubaiyat* into English quatrains. Forrest was amused at the juxtaposition of WEAA's Omar studies and his temperance pamphlets in the MCLA collections.

It was his discovery of the Welsh poet Simwnt Fychan's translation of a Martial epigram into Welsh, possibly the first translation into Welsh of a piece of classical Latin, that earned WEAA his bardic degree. He had found this curiosity as a broadside at Chetham's. In 1900 he sent his transcript to the professors at Bangor University, but they were rather scathing about the transcript and WEAA's notions. One of the professors, J Morris Jones, was already an unpopular figure with the bardic druids for debunking their claims that the mystic rites of the Gorsedd went back into prehistory. In contrast, a barrister in Swansea, D Lleuffer Thomas, was enthusiastic, passing copies of

WEAA's paper to the librarians, 'Should you attend an Eisteddfod, the bards would want to confer on you a Bardic Degree.[827] WEAA was presented to the Gorsedd at Caenarvon Castle in 1906, along with Judge Parry, a lively personality, well-known in Manchester. He then attended the Eisteddfod ceremony at Swansea in 1907, arranging for his robes to be made in the June by a Miss Lena Evans of the Art Embroidery Workshop in Cardiff. He took the bardic name Manceinion, the Welsh name for Manchester. Surprisingly there does not appear to be any mention of Manceinion in the newspaper reports of the Gorsedds and it is difficult to establish the detail.

WEAA deserved his bardic role. Unlike many, he had never overlooked Welsh literature, publishing an article by J R Dore on Welsh Bibles in *Book Lore*. Manchester had a large Welsh community, their own society, and were keen to have Welsh language collections in the libraries. WEAA was well known to this community, and sensitive to the language issue, for example, ensuring that a Temperance event had flyers in Welsh as well as English. Like many Mancunians he explored Wales in his holidays, and following on from

Simwnt Fycham, he continued with his Welsh studies, even worrying one scholar who warned him not to 'plunge into sixth century lunacies.' He embarked on a fertile correspondence with John Ballinger of the National Library of Wales, sending him his *Welsh Folk-lore of the Seventeenth Century*, receiving a whole set of *Cymadeitha Lleu Cymru*, and exchanging views on Welsh ballads. Ballinger arranged for WEAA's notes to be published in the journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society. In 1907 WEAA delighted Cardiff Public Libraries by presenting them with a manuscript, referred to by the librarian as 'the Wynne MS.'[828]

Despite being such a prolific author, and inevitably often treading familiar grounds, WEAA did not grow stale. He investigated new topics, learnt new languages, and shared with the reader his own sparks of excitement. His love of literary curiosities, the byways of folklore and archaeology, earned him the compliment of being an 'Explorer in the Diamond Mines of Ancient Verse.'[829]

Too far for some

His fascination with Buddha, Islam, Arabic and Mohammed, was not shared by the RSL,

declining his paper on Mohammed as 'there is a feeling against such subjects for a time.'[830] Casartelli, like WEAA, had found his interest in Oriental languages could be regarded with suspicion. WEAA's wider linguistic and cultural explorations are remarkable when the focus of nineteenth century scholarship was on Western Europe. Obsessive reading of obscure sources led WEAA beyond the limited framework of conventional scholarship and he revelled in 'that borderland of research which impinges on the several domains of comparative mythology, folk-lore, and literature.'[831] He also explored vegetarianism and temperance through Arabic texts and Islam.

WEAA's undated verse *The Prophet Mohammed and Wine* was, according to the reprint in MCLA, originally in the *Alliance News*. His grandson Geoffrey selected it for the posthumous edition of the anthology *An Axon Treasury*.[832] WEAA's definition of the 'tenfold curse' of wine neatly encapsulates temperance sentiments in a new and exotic context, '"These ten shall be accursed," Mohammed said.' The preservation of the poem at MCLA and in *An Axon Treasury*, evidence its

significance to WEAA. His paper on an Arab abstainer from “animal food’,[833] aroused much interest. He was also intrigued by the early appearance of Arabic coins and numerals in the West, writing several innovative papers.

These explorations led him into friendships with colourful personalities such as Sheik Abdullah Quilliam, the Liverpool solicitor who converted to Islam. Quilliam helped him with a design in his RSL article when it looked hopeful it would be welcomed. Quilliam donated copies of his *Crescent* journal to the Moss Side Library as well as offering to take contributions from WEAA. As the contents are not indexed, I have not so far managed to trace these.

WEAA was also friends with Aylmer Maude and his wife Louise, disciples, and translators of Tolstoy. WEAA provided the introduction to Maude’s translation of Tolstoy’s *First Steps*, a publication that soon proved popular. It is not clear whether WEAA had any expertise in Russian although his inclusion of three poems derived from Turgenev in *Treasury* suggest he might have.

He shared the Maude’s fascination with the

mysterious Russian people, the Doukhobórs or Spirit-Wrestlers. Their extreme principles of pacifism, animal rights, vegetarianism, temperance, and rejection of tobacco, appealed to WEAA as they did to their supporter, Tolstoy. His review of Maude's book *A Peculiar People*[834] is a powerful testimony to WEAA's ability to emphasise, whether with their 'wild fanaticism' in Canada or their approach to marriage, 'Yet the people who care so little for formalities that their marriages are practically free unions with unlimited powers of divorce are free from prostitution, and from conjugal ties made not from affection but for money.'[835]

Throughout this period WEAA continued to produce material relating to human rights, vegetarianism, and temperance. His extensive frame of reference, covering linguistic, scholarly, and historic sources, again enabled him to give extra dimensions and new insights, such as his article in 1903, *Some Chinese Arguments for Vegetarianism,* that brought praise from Dr Kellogg.[836] If WEAA could find support for vegetarianism, temperance, and pacifism in venerable figures and ancient manuscripts, there were journals

to welcome his evidence.

The Renaissance
Italy projected through literature and art, formed much of the English culture WEAA absorbed. It was a natural air to breathe. WEAA could not make the Grand Tour or even a Cooke's holiday, but he had Crestadoro and Casartelli to directly stimulate his interest. Manchester was full of Italian aficionados as well as its own thriving community of Italians. Inevitably he was a founder member of the Manchester Dante Society.

WEAA regularly translated Italian poems from various authors and was inevitably attracted to the fantastic tales of its saints and sinners. He wrote a cluster of papers on the Renaissance, using not just Italian but French and Germany sources. These papers, mostly delivered as lectures to the RSL, brought him much scholarly acclaim.

His papers on Renaissance topics are particularly lively and engaging. As always WEAA expressed his gratitude to other scholars: he made it clear in his paper on Etienne Dolet, the French printer and scholar executed for heresy,[837] that it was primarily based on Dr Richard Copley Christie's biography and research.[838] When Christie died in January 1901, WEAA added a heartfelt tribute in a postscript in the reprint of his paper. Christie, once a professor at Owens, was another who shared WEAA's principle of 'do good and communicate.'[839] WEAA also acknowledged his debt to Christie who had given him all his material on Lando as he was

thwarted from his own writing by “a painful and wasting disease which sapped his strength in later years.’ In a sense WEAA was completing his friend’s plans with a paper on Lando[840] and a pamphlet, *The Frugal Life*.[841] Again in the Lando paper WEAA warmly acknowledged Christie’s encouragement and generous sharing of his notes and rare books. WEAA and Christie had enjoyed a robust correspondence: Christie was annoyed by WEAA’s delay in delivering the index on Bailey for the Chetham Society, but usually wrote with warm admiration, especially over Lando, ‘as I know no other person but yourself who feels the slightest interest in the writer.’[842]

WEAA’s study, *Ortensio Lando, a Humorist of the Renaissance*, is a splendid account of his curious life and works, full of stories and fascinating analysis of his paradoxical spirit, ‘In reality Ortensio, with all his dialectical skill and wealth of illustration, is an inveterate joker, and we feel that in his most elaborate disquisitions he is, with however grave a face, only laughing in his sleeve.’

WEAA’s lecture to the RSL in 1899 on *Italian Influences on Chaucer*, was greatly acclaimed,

and he followed this up with some striking papers. The titles may suggest weighty content but the text skips along, bright with sketch and anecdote. His paper on the poet Tullia D'Aragona, 'one of the picturesque women figures of the later Renaissance' and 'the child of unlawful love' is a lively read.[843] WEAA cannot resist including the enthralling adventures of the Spanish hero, Meschino, translated into Italian verse by Tullia. Giants, cannibals, demons, and griffins abound. The RSL members must have been drawn back to childhood as they listened to WEAA's *The Story of Belfagor in Literature and Folk-Lore*. Here are tales of the archdemon Belfagor, sent to report back to Hell on marriage, so the Devil can assess the validity of sinners' complaints that their wives were to blame for their downfall. WEAA follows Belfagor's adventures as he is outwitted variously by his wife, a travelling physician, or his mother-in-law. WEAA picks up versions are scattered throughout the world, from Italy to Arabia by way of Ben Johnson.

Antonio Magliabechi

WEAA's paper for the LA on Antonio Magliabechi, the seventeenth century Italian

librarian, is a delight to read with its sympathetic portrayal of an eccentric scholar, renowned across Europe as well as in his native Florence. WEAA plays on the theme of how Magliabechi, whilst having an international reputation, never travelled beyond ten miles from Florence, perhaps thinking of his own focus on Manchester. WEAA gleefully describes the fascinating librarian, his house stuffed to the eaves with books, and his flapping black waistcoat and felted cloak, singed from his warming vase of coals. Magliabechi spied on visitors before deciding if he could entrust them with books, and loved spiders, calling out to readers, '"Take care you hurt not my spiders."' [844]WEAA had fond memories of the odd personalities he had encountered in library circles, was an ardent bookman himself, and unsurprisingly this is an affectionate portrait. Magliabechi as a scholar illustrated the vital principle that guided WEAA's own life, 'Of equal, perhaps of more importance was the generosity of spirit with which Magliabechi placed the results of his laborious researches at the disposal of all scholars.' WEAA concluded with words that could easily be

applied to himself, ‘The Apostolic injunction, “to do good, and to communicate, forget not,” has rarely been more completely exemplified than in the life of the eccentric, learned and generous-hearted Antonio Magliabechi.’

‘A Society with No Equal’: The Chetham Society

Alan G. Crosby’s entertaining history of the Chetham Society starts with its birth at James Crossley’s dinner table through to its 150th anniversary in 1993.[845] It is a remarkable tale of eccentric characters, solid scholarship, and survival against financial odds. Very much on the Anglican and Conservative side of Manchester cultural life, membership was restricted in numbers, and the Society’s aims were strictly the publication of volumes relating to the historical records of Lancashire and Cheshire. There were no talks, trips, or publication of minutes and papers.

Pre 1904 records have been lost. It is impossible to determine exactly when WEAA had his name added to the waiting list or eventually became a member. The subscription was one pound per annum. WEAA of course knew many of the members and was closely associated with several of them, including James Crossley, John E Bailey, John Parsons Earwaker, Colonel Henry Fishwick, H T Crofton and Richard Christie of Owens who became president in 1884.

Christie revived the fortunes of the Society and took a firm grasp of the chaotic

publication schedule. However, as his letters to WEAA illustrate he was suffering from serious illness, 'I have now one foot-not in the grave but progressing rapidly towards the Woking Crematorium.'[846] His death in 1901 was a blow for the Chetham Society and for WEAA personally.

I would guess that WEAA joined Chetham Society between 1883-1888 when he and John E. Bailey, the Secretary, were very much involved in scholarly matters. He was certainly a member by 1889 when he produced an index to the Chetham Society publications.[847] The Society's meetings were extensively reported in the *Guardian* and both WEAA and Sutton are mentioned after 1900 in association with the publications.

The scholarly monograph volumes were weighty and time-consuming affairs, and it is not surprising that WEAA's two short publications for the Society were issued instead as part of the *Miscellanies*. The first was the *Wonderful Child* in 1902[848] and the second was *Documents Relating to the Plague*, [849] published posthumously in 1915. Both are based on material that WEAA gathered for

much earlier papers. It is satisfying that WEAA does make an appearance, however slight, in this aristocrat of the Manchester communities of print.

Ernest was later involved with both the Chetham Society and the Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire as the two societies developed collaborative rather than competitive roles.

Dead Men's Shoes

In 1899, WEAA was invited by the publisher Routledge to send in biographical details for his entry in *Men and Women of the Time: A Dictionary of Contemporaries.* [850] This was the fifteenth edition of this very idiosyncratic work, 'a long labour of love' as the editor, Victor G. Plarr, librarian of the Royal College of Surgeons, described it in the Preface. As the 'contemporaries' changed status to dead, they were listed in the 'Necrology' at the back. The editor kept track on survivor numbers from the first edition of 1852. By 1899 there were only seven original survivors, including Queen Victoria, the Emperor of Austrian and Philip James Bailey, author of *Festus*, so admired by WEAA.

It is a measure of how highly WEAA was regarded that he had been selected to fill the shoes of a lapsed entry. The entry emphasises his author's role and membership of learned societies. He is placed in

the Author category in the classified index though he could equally fit with others. Given WEAA supplied the details his last sentence is a useful summary of where he was at this stage, 'He has edited a reprint of "Caxton's Game and Playe of the Chesse," and has printed many pamphlets, some for private circulation, in advocacy of temperance and food reform, or in elucidation of obscure points of bibliography and literary history.'

International Brotherhood

A new society brought together several of WEAA's interests. This was the International Brotherhood, also referred to as the Manchester International Brotherhood. WEAA joined in 1901 and was variously President, Vice President, Chair.

Details are scrappy but can be pieced together from a printed flyer in AP, local newspapers, and a letter from the Chairman Walter Butterworth, reminding *Guardian* readers of the late WEAA's important role in this movement. C P Scott, George Milner of the MLC, and four others were also Vice Presidents. The flyer gave the details that Dr Bertha Skeat had founded this movement in 1897, that the headquarters were in Manchester and that, "The object of the Brotherhood is to bring about social intercourse between persons of different nationalities. It is non-partisan in politics and non-sectarian.'[851] The motto was 'Amor Omnia Vincit.' The movement had grand aims, dear to WEAA's heart, of friendship between nations, breaking down barriers through

‘mutual knowledge’ and international laws replacing the ‘War System.’

There were ambitions to set up branches throughout other towns, to co-operate with other social movements in Manchester and to publish a monthly journal in various languages, *Amicitia*. WEAA would surely have contributed but I have not traced any copies. The International Brotherhood was probably where WEAA first encountered Esperanto writers: he corresponded with several and included Margaret L. Blaise’s Esperanto poem in his anthology, *The Bazaar*.[852]

He may also have been involved in the Esperanto gathering that ran just before the Eistedffod he attended in Swansea in 1907. The *Guardian* reporter speculated deeply on the apparently diametrically opposed aims of these two ventures.[853] WEAA had no problem appreciating both and as the reporter recognised Esperanto and ideals of international brotherhood were inextricably linked.

Linguistics and humanism merged perfectly together for WEAA in this movement. There could not have been a closer match to his

principle of helping fellow men and women of all nations. As a friend remembered in 1914, ‘A peace-lover, he rendered much service to the International Brotherhood (Manchester), his knowledge of languages being especially helpful to this society of which he was president some years ago.’[854]

At the start there were 108 members in nineteen countries, with English centres in London, Manchester, and Halifax, and it must have all fulfilled hopes for an enlightened future for humanity. I have found no trace of it after the 1930s.

Appreciation from Fellow Writers

WEAA was undoubtedly a stalwart friend, generous of his precious time and energy. Over the years he received many expressions of gratitude and affection, some in published form and others as personal letters, carefully kept in his papers. Samuel Laycock wrote a tribute to him, an unpublished verse, that expresses the transformation WEAA made in his life, giving a brother ‘a lift on the way.’[855]

Joseph Cooper, the ‘Derbyshire Poet’, one of WEAA’s oldest friends, also composed tributes. Born in 1810, he was compelled to work at six or seven years old as his father had died and his widowed mother had seven children to care for. The family were Primitive Methodists. What limited education he gained was from his mother and the Sunday school where he became a teacher. Then all went wrong. Cooper described in vivid language how he was destroyed by his craving for drink, saved only in 1844 by ‘a Teetotal Life Boat,’ the Independent Order of Rechabites. Like WEAA he became an energetic temperance worker, campaigning through his talks and

verses. Some of these were in dialect. He was one of the oldest members of the MLC. Cooper and WEAA had hard childhoods, the temperance cause, dialect, literature, and poetry in common.

Cooper produced one acrostic and two poems for WEAA. All three were published in his very lively collection of poems and literary pieces, *Helping God to Make the Flowers Grow*. Hopefully WEAA would have understood the affection behind the lines,

> 'Rather small, very great
> Small body, large soul'[856]

WEAA's friend Arthur Croxton joked that the appearance of the acrostic in a Derbyshire newspaper may have brought on WEAA's latest illness, 'Everybody must admire and love Mr Cooper, but his verses are sometimes very comic.'[857]As well as the poems Cooper 'respectfully dedicated' the book to WEAA, highlighting his position as President of the Manchester and Salford Temperance Union.

Both WEAA and Cooper had poems published in *North Country Poets*[858] and WEAA supplied the biographical note for Cooper, detailing the popularity of his *An Owdham Melludy* at the MLC sessions and mentioning that hundreds of thousands of copies of his temperance verses

were sent to the soldiers in the Crimea.

Dedications were common in nineteenth century books and those in WEAA's own books highlight key friends and mentors. In turn it would be intriguing to trace books dedicated to WEAA for surely Joseph Cooper was not alone.

It is quite moving to find WEAA, along with other apostles of vegetarianism and peace, in a modern roll call of honour, 'This book is dedicated to the Bible Christian Church, William Metcalfe, W.E.A. Axon, Sylvester Graham, Joseph Brotherton, M.P., Henry Stephen Clubb, William Cowherd, Mahatma Gandhi, Leo Tolstoi, and the Soyfoods Movement.' [859]

CHAPTER 25

POET LAUREATE OF ANCOATS

Words of the Poet

Poetry ran throughout WEAA's life, not just in his own compositions and translations but in his love of the works of fellow poets. He did not despise minor poetry if the spirit were true: there was something sacred to WEAA in the bardic role. When WEAA was toasted at LA dinner in 1881, he responded with an emotional speech on what literature meant to him, 'in the darkest hour of his life the words of consolation came to him, not from the lips of the preacher, but on the wings of the words of the poet.' [860] Perhaps above all else he achieved, WEAA valued his calling as a poet.

Early Efforts

As already described WEAA started his poetic career with a juvenile broadsheet poem, contributed verses to local newspapers and various journals, and in 1876 privately published a collection of his translated poems in *Exotica*. He wrote both dialect and mainstream verse, his dialect verses appearing in anthologies. It was in the late 1880s that

more substantial collections appeared, striking a note with a wider audience.

Northern Poets

Four of WEAA's own poems appeared in *North Country Poets*[861] together with a short but very informative biographical note, written by J Oscar Parker. In the same volume WEAA provided biographical notes for four fellow poets.

Poetically inclined members of the MLC enjoyed exchanging opinions on their verses and WEAA had his place in their circle. It was always said of WEAA that he kept the directly personal out of his writing and this was in the general mode of the MLC. One instance illustrates this. Francis Bradley was a new member and George Milner, The President, rejected Bradley's verses for the *Manchester Quarterly* on the grounds that 'though good in themselves, [they] have too much of the element of personal sentiment in them for the *Quarterly*.'[862]

Ten Sonnets

The tiny collection of WEAA's poems entitled *Ten Sonnets*, was labelled as 'not published' but printed by John Heywood in 1889.[863] WEAA had selected the poems, presumably as

favourites, from the *Manchester Quarterly*, *Shorthand Monthly*, the *Lancashire Christmas Annual*, *Book-Lore*, *Academy*, and the *Good Templars' Watchword*. The ten sonnets leap from legends, temperance, Buddha, vegetarianism, to Sussex, Hastings and my own favourite, the delightful acrostic *On Reading Sir John Mandeville's Voyages and Travels*.

Poet Laureate of Ancoats

In 1894 John Heywood published a substantial collection of WEAA's poetry, *The Ancoats Skylark and Other Verses, Original and Translated*. There are 106 poems, four illustrations and a dedication to the Rev. James Clark, 'in token of a friendship of many years, and of sympathy with his zealous labours for brightening and bettering the life of the people.'[864] The dedication makes sense for many of the poems are on religious, vegetarian or temperance themes, and James Clark was the radical minister of the Bible Christian Church Salford, the institution intimately involved with the vegetarian movement.

It was George Jacob Holyoake who dubbed

WEAA 'Poet Laureate of Ancoats'[865] in tribute to his book, named after the first poem, *The Ancoats Skylark,* 'You ought to be the Poet Laureate of Ancoats. The first poem should make the fortune of any volume & the reputation of any author. I had no idea of the variety and compass of your poetic powers.'[866]

WEAA introduced most of the poems with notes, explaining the source of the story or the origin of his inspiration. Some of these notes are extensive, especially where WEAA discussed different interpretations of manuscripts. The breadth of his reading is stunning. There is a dazzling array of sources; Mohammed, Buddha, Christian saints, Hebrew hymns jostle with Plato, Victor Hugo, Schiller, the Cuban revolutionary J C Zenea, Rabbi Stern, El Ghazzali and 'A Good Templar Sister.' There are poems 'suggested by', 'founded upon', 'imitated from' or simply 'from' classical writers, European authors, Chinese poets, manuscripts, sculpture, paintings, folksongs, and fables. The selection of subjects is very much in line with WEAA's humane views.

As well as creating verse in both dialect and standard English, WEAA delighted in translating poems from a range of languages, including Italian, Welsh, Romani, Portuguese, Chinese and Arabic, discussing esoteric interpretations with scholarly friends. Victorian readers had a taste for viewing exotic cultures through the safe media of art, photography, and translated poetry. WEAA's ability to convey the subtle nuances of foreign

language poems linked into this fashion. As well as careful translations he produced freer adaptations or even new verses inspired by poems from other languages. The lines of original and 'from' are blurred. WEAA was a sensitive translator, endeavouring to be true to the author's intention. As he saw it, 'The golden rule is to keep as close to the original as you can, and when it is impossible to retain both the letter and the spirit, sacrifice the letter without hesitation, for in literature as in religion it is the letter that killeth and the spirit that giveth life.'[867]

WEAA was adept in ensuring the esoteric content was accessible to ordinary readers: he was an old hand at this. The notes are clear, the overall arrangement simple, and the sentiments understandable. It is a deceptively easy read, delivering a rich feast of learning, philosophy, and emotion as if it were simple bread and water.

The *Guardian* review itself makes interesting reading. The reviewer, maybe one of C P Scott's Oxford graduates, has a slightly patronising tone. He mentioned WEAA's many readers, his numerous and varied contributions to literature and considers it 'a pleasant little book ; neither so small as to be insignificant nor so large as to become a burden.' He picks up that WEAA is drawing on the one hand from 'a large experience of

common life' and on the other hand 'from much reading in remote provinces of literature', and that the poems of city life would make good material for recitations, as indeed proved to be the case. But the reviewer struggled with the deliberately random order that WEAA presented, 'It would have been well, we think, if the volume had been arranged in sections, which would have included such as the following-sonnets, translations, Oriental apologues, medieval legends, stories of the streets, and poems in dialect.'

What he sees as a weakness is the book's appeal. The reviewer has little idea of how browsing amongst random selections of literature, whether from second-hand book stalls, old newspapers, or discarded treasures, enabled the self-taught like WEAA to discover worlds beyond their immediate ken. The mixed collection is intended as a delight to dip into. Similar random arrangements appear in WEAA's anthologies of essays such as *Echoes of Old Lancashire*. WEAA was a professional classifier and indexer: if he chose to avoid systematic categorisation there was a good reason for it.

Nor was the reviewer aware of WEAA's experiences years ago as a dialect writer when he recommended that WEAA 'may well be encouraged to make further experiments in the vernacular.' In fact, the *Owd Dan's Fiddle* he refers to is probably WEAA's last piece of dialect writing, published in the *Guardian* on 15 July 1890.

Reactions

Accustomed as he was to praise, WEAA must have been taken aback by the huge enthusiasm this little book generated, perhaps more than any other of his works.

WEAA's own poems, expressions of his experiences, emotions, and thoughts, appealed more directly to the readers than the adaptations and translations. The first poem, *The Ancoats Skylark,* generated an outstanding response. His contemporaries also singled out *Dickeybird* but its popularity has not lasted, probably being too sentimental for modern taste.

Most recipients remarked on the simplicity and strength of the verses, their emotional appeal, wisdom, and truth. Both fervent Christians like T C Horsfall and freethinkers like Joseph Mazzini Wheeler could derive pleasure in the poems just as they could share friendship with WEAA, a man who could bind the most unlikely characters together. Others focused on the love of nature that runs throughout the book. C Tomlinson wrote, 'The book seems well calculated to encourage kindness and good will, a love for nature and tenderness towards the animal world.'

WEAA had the rare trick of appealing to a diverse range of readers, from the humble temperance worker like Joseph Billam on Rochdale Road through to the anarchist Russian aristocrat, Prince Kropotkin in Viola Cottage, Bromley. Billam called *The Ancoats Skylark* poem a 'Glad New Song for the Struggling Poor' whilst Kropotkin confessed '*Ancoats Skylark* and *Dickeybird* went straight to my heart'.[868] However, he did wish that there was less of the Deity in the volume, 'is not Nature itself friend enough without personification'.[869]

One friend, George Power, wrote to WEAA of the pleasure the poems had brought him and that he was 'pleased to have them bound together : they are educational for my children.' He added a 'little sentiment' that WEAA would have fully understood, 'I think of the position I had when a boy & what I have now for my youngsters : that time was little schooling, mere chance work, often with empty stomach from time I got out of bed to close of school at 4 p.m. How changed for my little ones ; All Praise to the Good Spirit'.[870]

C P Scott thanked WEAA 'for your charming

little book', adding lightly that 'I think we ought to start a small library of the works of the Guardian staff. It would begin to make a handsome show.'[871]

Meta Gaskell found the poems 'touch me to the quick.'[872] One correspondent with a rather indecipherable signature, possibly H Wetherburn, described how Sir William enjoyed reading them but 'not without tears.'[873]

The Scottish novelist, S R Crockett, married to George Milner's daughter, was astonished by the strength and charm of the verses, singling out *Ypres Tower* and *The Ancoats Skylark* 'a strain from the heart of the dim place we call Ancoats.' He spoke for many when he described the book as 'exceeding precious to me.'[874]

The learned Casartelli appreciated his friend's scholarship as well as the value for recitation, 'I gave two readings from it one night at an entertainment for our boys here – 'Dickeybird' and 'Owd Dan's Fiddle' and they were greatly appreciated.'

The formidable best-selling author, Hall Caine, had a soft spot for WEAA and he wrote with generous appreciation, especially of the translations, concluding 'You have done so

well to publish this little volume. It will do good in the world. So wise, so simple, so true.'[875]

As well as cutting across the classes and flying across the country from Midlothian to London, the verses inspired similar thoughts with American recipients. Neal Dow, the temperance politician, kept a copy by his side to remind him of Manchester and Moss Side, Henry Clubb praised the book and promised a review, whilst William Scarborough was overwhelmed, writing to WEAA that he was honoured to be his friend and 'you are my ideal of a man of letters.' [876]

The Ancoats Skylark: The Poem

Around 1884, before it made an appearance in print, WEAA sent copies of his poem *The Ancoats Skylark* to a few friends, including George Milner, the MLC President. It was common for MLC members to exchange drafts of poems or papers, hoping, as authors always do, for encouragement and praise.

George Milner's response was positive, 'I return the poem which I read with much pleasure. You must have knocked it off red hot. I think you should let Oakley see it.'[877]

The school inspector H E Oakley's speech at the opening of the Manchester School Board Central Higher Grade School had inspired the poem. Oakley had spoken of his experience in Ancoats when he had asked the boys if they had ever seen a skylark and had the reply about the one in a cage at a public-house.

As Milner suggested, WEAA sent the poem to Oakley and received this reply, 'Thanks for the touching lines about the Ancoats little boy, which are very interesting to me. If you have them to spare (since as I am sorry to see they are not published) would you kindly send me 2 or 3 more copies?'[878]

WEAA's good friend Bone enjoyed the 'your charming poem', sent to him along with WEAA's paper on Byron, gracefully referencing it in his letter, 'It is always a pleasure to me – as much "caged" here almost as your Ancoats boy – to see your hand.'[879]

The Ancoats Skylark poem was first published in 1884 in the *Manchester Quarterly*,[880] the journal of the MLC, surprising some who had not previously encountered WEAA as a poet. A fellow MLC poet Francis Bradley commented on this briefly before returning to the more

fascination topic of his own verse, ‘Excuse me mentioning the fact, but I was not aware until now that you wrote verses, and so your remark about mine is more to be valued.’[881] It appeared in *VM* in December 1884.

There are several mentions of the poem over the next ten years as people happened upon it the *Manchester Quarterly, VM* or heard it recited. WEAA gave it as part of his lay sermon to the Ancoats Brotherhood in 1891. AP correspondents were struck by its emotional force. Then the poem reached a wider audience when it was published in *The Ancoats Skylark* collection.

WEAA captures the moment when the boy surprises his teacher by knowing of a lark in Ancoats, a district then notorious for its brutality and deprivation:

A silence fell upon the class
On all the listening ring
Then one said, “Sir, I’ve seen a lark,
“And heard him loudly sing.”

“And where, my little Ancoats lad,
Did you the layrock see? ”
“ ‘Twas in a wooden cage that hung
“Outside the ‘Cotton Tree.’ ”

Alas, poor bird! chained thus amidst
The city’s smoke and gloom,
No more for thee the sunny sky,
The wild flower’s sweet perfume.

Alas, poor caged Ancoats boy!
That freedom's song ne'er heard
Thrilled o'er the fells of Lancashire
By this bright poet-bird.

The simple poem struck home. Many echoed the sentiments of the secularist, Joseph Mazzini Wheeler, who wrote, 'The poem which gives the title in its simple pathos reminds me of Wordsworth, who I think would not have dismissed it. The epigrams are tersely & happily expressed and throughout I find nature, sweetness & light which will last when the morbidity of the decadent school is forgotten.'[882]

Birds, especially robins and skylarks, were icons to many of WEAA's generation. They were denizens of a freer world and yet vulnerable, as people were, to brutal abuses. They soared above the pollution but could fall into it. They were innocent victims of sport, fashions, and cruelty. The *VM* even has a horrific description of a woman in a dress garlanded with the feet, beaks, and feathers of robins. No wonder the caged Ancoats skylark went straight to the heart of so many of WEAA's readers. It played its part in the formation of societies to protect birds from

exploitation.

It is evident from all these expressions of emotion that this little volume and this poem out of all the multitude of WEAA's writing, were the most cherished. S R Crockett crystallised this in his comment, 'I have known a good many of your writings here & there but none I think that gave me more pleasure than this.'[883]

Fortunately, before all this heady praise went to WEAA's modest head, Mrs Banks in her usual robust style complimented him on the book but added, 'let me call your attention to my late husband's "Lay of the captive Lark" which you will find in the first volume of Wm Andrew' North Country Poets. They have a somewhat similar foundation.'[884] Manchester friends regarded Mrs Banks' adored husband with a somewhat jaundiced eye and the poem serves merely to highlight how infinitely better is *The Ancoats Skylark*. (WEAA was brave in undertaking on the *DNB* entry for Mr Banks. MCL have his draft, thoroughly edited with blue pen by Mrs Banks.)

There are continuing references in the AP correspondence to *The Ancoats Skylark* poem.

There were requests for permission to recite or to set to music. As time passed the original context and meaning were sometimes forgotten. In 1909 one newspaper correspondent, pondering on the irony of the beautiful names given to the ugliest of places, remembered the title of the poem written some years ago and wondered whether 'skylarks really did sing in the places that now hear no song save that of the drunkard as he wends his way home after closing time.'[885]

In recent years the poem and its true meaning have been rediscovered and discussed online under such titles as *'Hard and Darkened Lives: the Ancoats Skylark'*[886] and *'The Ancoats Skylark: the forgotten story of a Manchester songbird that Inspired a poet.'*[887]

An Ode to Manchester

In 2006 Aidan Turner-Bishop quoted from the poem and thus described the collection in which it appeared, 'Manchester historians may be interested in William Axon's The Ancoats Skylark, a touching collection of poems and writings.'[888] The radical Manchester historian Malc Cowle filmed Ancoats as the background to his recitation of the poem, making it available on Vimeo and YouTube. Even now,

or perhaps particularly now, it has the power to hit the listener emotionally.[889]

In 2017 in the aftermath of the Arena bombing, the Manchester poet Tony Walsh united the city by his reading at the vigil his now iconic poem *This is the Place : Choose Love*. Tony Walsh followed a long tradition of Lancashire poets who spoke directly to people with images that struck deep. Two centuries apart, *This is the Place* and *The Ancoats Skylark* are united as the poems that in their time stood for Manchester.

I chose *The Ancoats Skylark* for an early BL website mapping favourite literary pieces to their locations, 'Education, culture, nature and wonder somehow managed to keep the human spirit alive – and Axon knew this more than most.'[890]

Looking again at the poem it seems to me that this was right: WEAA captured the city's spirit of resilience: somehow joy survived in the grimmest surroundings. *The Ancoats Skylark* is a poignant expression of lives trapped in city streets with aspirations that may never be fulfilled. But both the bird in the cage and boy in the slums remain robust and resilient.

‘The boy is blithe, and strong of heart,
The bird ne’er fails in song’

Broadbent’s *Treasuries*

Alfred Broadbent, the secretary of the VS, was a publisher, both for the VS and on his own account. Several Manchester poets appeared in his themed collections of verse known as the *Broadbent Treasuries*. Popular for a long time these tiny books are now collectors’ items: they have played their part in keeping some of WEAA’s poems in view. Broadbent’s miniature books with their good quality paper and delicately ornamented covers are delightful. Charles Rowley produced one, *A Brotherhood Treasury*, for the Ancoats Brotherhood, with an exquisite design by Walter Crane. They were perfect to send to friends. WEAA posted out many copies and was rewarded with appreciative responses.

Broadbent dedicated one of his *Treasuries* to WEAA, 'Scholar, and Worker for the Social Good. To whose kind encouragement and sympathy these booklets owe their existence, this little 'Treasury of Consolation' is Dedicated, in appreciation of the goodness and simplicity of his character.'[891] In a letter to WEAA, Broadbent added, 'I always feel you to be responsible for these ventures I have made into the book world.'[892]

In 1902 a collection of WEAA's adaptations, *A*

Treasury of Translations, was published as one of the Treasuries series.[893] The second collection, *An Axon Treasury*, published in 1907 included eighteen original verses as well as the translations.[894] Most of these had been printed previously in journals like the *Academy*, *Manchester Quarterly* and the *VM*. WEAA in the introductory note described the attraction of translation, 'For many years foreign literature has afforded me a favourite recreation, and I have more frequently sought the byways than the highways.'

The two WEAA collections went through several editions even after Broadbent's death in 1912. The fourth edition of *An Axon Treasury* was published posthumously in 1914. Geoffrey was the editor, and he included a little sketch of his grandfather's life as well as a new woodcut portrait.[895] His perceptive selection reflects both WEAA's life and his steadfast visions.

CHAPTER 26

BROWN BREAD AND ABOLITION

‘A Southern Planter found his daughter eating Brown Bread, and forbid her saying

“I have never known a person who began by eating Brown Bread but ended by being an Abolitionist”’ Elver T W Evans, Mt Lebanon New York to WEAA, 1887 [896]

Abolition and Anti-Lynching

AP correspondents fall into natural clusters with many cross overs between them. We have met antiquarians, dialect poets, early folklorists, newspaper editors, publishers, vegetarians, temperance workers, writers, scholarly and personal friends, many of them Manchester Men and Women.

The cluster that populates this and the next chapter may surprise those who know WEAA only in bibliographic, scholarly, and reform roles. Here we find significant names relating to abolition, and after the American Civil War to the anti-lynching and anti-caste campaigns.

WEAA was a participant in the affairs of Mrs Barboza, Catherine Impey, Helen Douglass, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Francis J Garrison, William S Scarborough, Ida B Wells, the Fisk Jubilee Singers, and others, names familiar to historians of the post-Civil War ‘Jim Crow’ era. The Axon home was on the circuit for campaigning activists, a place where they could be sure of a welcome and where friends could freely meet.
We know something of his motivation from WEAA’s own words.

From Accidental Circumstances

In the preface to his biography of William Lloyd Garrison WEAA wrote, ‘From accidental

circumstances, no less than from my own keen interest in the result of the great controversy as to human rights, I was an eager watcher from afar of the picturesque and terrible drama of Slavery, from the publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" to the Emancipation Proclamation of Lincoln.'[897]

In his usual way WEAA refrains from more personal explanation so what these 'accidental circumstances' were can only be speculative. From an early age WEAA may well have heard talks from fugitive slaves at local chapels or halls, touring the country to raise active sympathy for emancipation. Sarah Parker Redmond, a black abolitionist, campaigned throughout Lancashire in 1859 and even spoke at the Athenaeum. She had significant impact, commemorated in 2020 with an artwork at Manchester Art Gallery.

WEAA heard tales from Richard Wright Procter of his friend Robert Rose, the Manchester 'Bard of Colour.' Despite his education, private income and talent, this poet who came as a child from Berbice, suffered the wounding jibes and practical jokes that even friends thought acceptable. The West Indian community in Liverpool had Rose's anti-slavery speech, delivered famously at a dinner for Lord Brougham in 1835, printed.[898] WEAA may well have read this. Sadly, Rose seems to have turned to drink in his loneliness and in 1849 died in a police cell in mysterious circumstances. The tragedy of Robert Rose

might well have struck the young WEAA: he mentioned him sympathetically in his article, *"Millgate," and its Associations*.[899]

Another candidate is suggested by WEAA's *Annals of Manchester*. WEAA gave a long entry for the Rev. Edward Mathews who died in Manchester in January 1873 and probably also wrote the commemorative *Alliance News* article. WEAA praised Matthew's *Autobiography*, as 'a vivid picture of the state of public feeling on the slavery question, both in the Northern and Southern States. He was frequently mobbed and ill-treated by pro-slavery ruffians.' No doubt where WEAA's sympathies lay. Mathews was a Baptist minister, a fervent abolitionist who on his return to England in 1851 was on a mission to arouse the churches against slavery. As he lived in Manchester it seems very likely that the Baptist Thomas Axon and his family went to hear him preach. If so, WEAA would have been around five or six when he was first alerted to this evil. This would also fit with his mention of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as an influence as it was published first in serialized and then in book form in 1851-52.

Campaigns and Journalism

In 1865 the final legislation was in place in the USA to emancipate all slaves. Yet the government never enforced the necessary legal and political controls. Extreme racism, lynching, and segregation prevailed in the nightmarish aftermath of the Civil War. Despite the terror, African Americans did not accept defeat of their aspirations. In the UK the old abolitionists joined younger reformers in campaigning both for their comrades in the USA and for rights of indigenous people in the British Empire. WEAA was involved in all this.

There is a long history of British and African American alliances throughout the nineteenth century. Both before and after abolition, British opinion was regarded as a critical factor in the USA campaigns. Supporters provided funding and organisation for the tours of activists, entry into influential political networks, and publicity. The *Guardian* under C P Scott had moved on from its lukewarm stance on the Civil War, and a staunch journalist like WEAA, on the newspaper's editorial team, with extensive contacts in other reform movements, was invaluable. As well as hospitality and publicity, WEAA gave activists practical guidance in organising events in a variety of venues. The friendships forged were maintained through correspondence.

Universality and Other Principles

As quoted at the start of this chapter, one of WEAA's American friends commented humorously on the dangers of brown bread and

abolition.

The link is not as odd as might first appear for abolition, equality, temperance, and the vegetarian movement were entwined principles for many reformers of WEAA's generation. All would lead to the better world, to the enlightened humanity that WEAA and others of the same mind believed to be possible. In their own lives they had witnessed the progress of political, social, and civic reform, stumbling progress certainly but still providing wider and fairer opportunities.

Against all this came the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, scientific racism, and hardening attitudes to foreigners, especially of colour, ending in the repressive Aliens Act of 1905. Frederick Douglass noted sadly the difference between his first visit to the UK in the 1840s when miraculously everyone seemed oblivious to his colour and in 1860 when racist attitudes from the USA had spread and 'nigger minstrel' shows denigrated his race. The 1873 to 1879 period has been named 'the long depression.' The economic hardship exacerbated racism and hatred of foreign immigrants on both sides of the Atlantic.

It is a shock to realise that both Abel and John Heywood published what can now only be seen as the vilest books on black people, advertised alongside Lancashire recitations, dialect verse and skits on the Irish. Abel Heywood's advertisement appeared in *Ben Brierley's Journal*, '*Stump Speeches and Nigger Jokes.* For Nigger, Minstrel, and other Entertainments. The speeches are racy and highly amusing,' The advertisement claimed copies had quickly sold out.[900]

WEAA respected African American sensibilities

and was singularly free from prejudice or from viewing people as comic. It was not the case with all his friends. Some might stand for equality but still treated black people as objects for humour or condescension. A Band of Hope colleague, W Chandos Wilson, admired WEAA's biography of the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, and in the same letter mentioned having heard Bishop Hawkins speak of his escape from slavery. He then added, 'I was intensely amused as well as really interested. A negro camp meeting in the middle of Manchester is a novel experience.'[901] This was in 1891.

The *Guardian* had already given an account of Bishop Hawkins' talk at the Primitive Methodist Church, Higher Ardwick. Bishop Hawkins' stark revelations of being a black in America ranged from the personal hurt of jeering comments to the terror of lynch law with 250,000 murdered since emancipation. Chandos Wilson could still be amused by 'a negro camp.' It is likely WEAA wrote the *Guardian* article.[902]

WEAA was well used to being an outsider in his views and nothing deterred him in his

support of equal rights. He experienced the weight of hostile public feeling when the *Guardian* stood out against the Boer War and the mob even stoned C P Scott's house. Jingoism reigned supreme as the new twentieth century marched inexorably on to WW1. (It was WEAA's friend, the secularist George Holyoake who coined the phrase jingoism in his letter to the *Daily News* 13 March 1878, basing it on the song popular around the Russo-Turkish war.)

WEAA, despite his sensibilities, did not flinch from the horrors. When Ida B Wells forced the graphic details of lynching upon her readers in the USA and Britain, she described the unimaginable tortures of men, women, and children, mutilated, flayed, and burnt alive whilst mobs took souvenirs from living flesh and photographed the executions as trophies. How did WEAA and his friends cope with this?

But cope they did and furthermore responded by active engagement in the campaigns against such evils.

Temperance

Temperance was an important principle for many African American activists. Frederick Douglass had denounced drink as the method by which slaveholders stultified their human property. In the post-Civil War period when African Americans were trying to establish their status against racist repulsion that held them more brute than human, it was critical not to succumb to drink. Black women

especially had reason to campaign. Through temperance they could undermine the contemptuous stereotypes of black women as dissolute and immoral. One black prohibitionist, Frances Ellen Harper, saw alcohol and slavery as 'twin evils' and 'believed black women had the same imperative to fight the former as they had the latter.'[903]

Since the mid 1860s WEAA had been a member of the IOGT, and in 1886 rose to the high position of Honorary Deputy Grand Worthy Chief Templar, receiving the IOGT's degree a few weeks later. Inevitably he was immersed in the conflict that what one historian has entitled 'The Great Schism of 1876 to 1887,'[904] the split between the USA and Britain sides of the movement. Racism was at the heart of this for despite IOGT's principle of fraternity and universalism, members in the southern states demanded segregation and an inferior position for black membership. The split also involved power politics, a struggle for dominance between Joseph Malins in the UK and the American leaders.

WEAA left the IOGT briefly, re-joining in 1885. John Edwards of

the Manchester Grand Lodge persuaded him as, 'I think the matter that took you away from the City Lodge is scarcely known now in the lodges except by the older members & they never talk of it, as it has been passed into oblivion.' Edwards then mentions Malins, and his comments confirm that it was the politics of segregation that made WEAA resign rather than some lesser parochial affair.

Eventually a compromise was reached, accepting segregated branches in the USA.
WEAA shared his friend Catherine Impey's disgust without going to the extent of permanently resigning as she did.

IOGT was an international movement and WEAA, always responsive to forging relationships with other cultures, became an examiner for Indian members. He remained a Deputy Chief Templar until his death.

Food Reform

The vegetarian movement was a different matter and does not seem to have engaged African Americans. The diet of slaves, as Diana C Crader wrote, is 'one of the most bitterly debated of all topics of slavery.'[905] Corn, vegetables, and pork were recorded as staple foods but not for every slave of course. Frederick Douglass bitterly recalled the trough of Indian cornmeal that he and the other slave children fed from, using oyster shells as scoops. As punishment he was even deprived of this miserable sustenance and made to starve. He wrote of their basic food, the ashcake, thick with the ashes it was baked in.

Having this enforced, limited diet in the background was not likely to turn newly emancipated people into vegetarians. The vegetarian

movement in the USA predominantly stemmed from white middle class reformers.

African American visitors to WEAA's home were not comfortable with the family's strict vegetarian regime.

The Lancashire Cotton Famine (1861-1864)

In 1787 an abolitionist meeting held at the Manchester Parish Church had major impact on the anti-slavery movement. It became difficult to avoid the knowledge that national prosperity, especially in the cities of Glasgow, Bristol, Liverpool, and Manchester, were rooted in an unspeakable trade. When positions were drawn, Lancashire workers were on the side of freedom, against their own interests. Some merchants too refused to touch any trade related to slavery: Thomas Quincey, father of Thomas De Quincey, was a successful Manchester linen trader who avoided any connection with the slave trade, including as his son recorded, 'the use of sugar in his own family.'[906]

WEAA as a young library assistant experienced the impact of the Cotton Famine first-hand, both in the streets of Manchester and at Campfield Free Library, where overwhelming numbers of the unemployed sought newspapers, reading material and shelter. Distress was apparent in the district where he lived, as was the anger about the shortcomings of relief.

Despite the terrible hardships the Manchester cotton workers assembled on 31 December

1862 at the Free Trade Hall in what the *Guardian* now describes as 'a historic show of solidarity against slavery,'[907] voting support for Lincoln's embargo against slave picked cotton. At the time the lukewarm *Guardian* with its readership primarily amongst the manufacturing classes, tried to deter the workers from assembling for such a purpose.

Was the sixteen-year-old WEAA at the assembly? The audience was predominantly artisan but as ever in Manchester middle class reformers were also there, Abel Heywood serving as chair but not in his capacity as mayor. The MP Thomas Bazley, later one of WEAA's correspondents, was present and from acrimonious correspondence in the *Guardian* it appears there were several youths there too, 'between sixteen and twenty years old.'[908]

WEAA's Hero, 'The Madman Garrison': William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879)

When Henry Mayer embarked on his colossal modern biography of Garrison, he found that 'many good people tried to warn me off.'[909] Yet Garrison was the man who as Mayer wrote, 'with a Biblical prophet's power and a propagandist's skill, forced the nation to confront the most crucial moral issue in its

history.' As an extremist challenging the norms, Garrison became the stereotype of the 'lunatic fringe.' He was a nonconformist, a self-made man with little formal education, a pacifist, of unshakeable principles and with total disregard for mainstream politics.

In the late 1820s he demanded the impossible: immediate emancipation and equal rights for black people. Garrison inspired generations and gave abolition its voice through his newspaper *The Liberator* which he ran for thirty-five years, an 'unrivalled example of personal journalism in the service of civic idealism.' He was a devoted family man, mild and gentle, illuminated with intelligence and fine humour. He was a committed temperance worker, campaigning for a complete ban. Drink had destroyed his father and ruined his sailor brother whom nevertheless Garrison nursed and cared for.

It was critical for the abolitionists, Garrison amongst them, to rekindle anti-slavery sentiment in Britain. There were complex issues to address. Garrison wanted to disabuse the British public of the notion popular with many abolitionists that colonization was a solution. Colonization encompassed returning enslaved Africans to Africa or dumping them somewhere in South America.

Garrison visited Britain several times on his propaganda tours of Britain. In 1867 when abolition was finally achieved, he returned to Europe for a holiday.

WEAA and Garrison

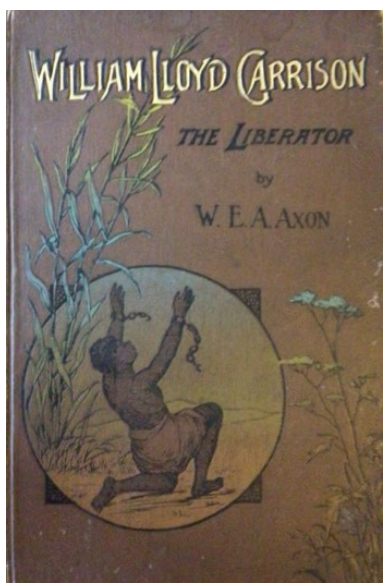
In many ways Garrison was WEAA's beau ideal. WEAA could have been self-referencing when he wrote this:

> 'Garrison believed in the brotherhood of man ; and it is only by a recognition of this truth, which he felt so vividly, that society can exist in peace and contentment ; every evasion of it is a danger and every denial a treason ; and in proportion as it is made the basis of action and conduct will national prosperity and individual happiness increase.
>
> Much yet remains to be done for the cause to which Garrison devoted his life. Freedom, Justice, and Temperance are still watchwords of the army of progress, and however much its march may be impeded, however many may falter or fall by the way, in spite of some casual discouragement or partial defeat, they are the watchwords of a host marching to a victory that cannot be prevented or denied.'[910]

WEAA never forgot meeting his hero. In July 1867 Garrison came to Manchester on his holiday tour. He was a welcome guest of the predominantly liberal and non-conformist Manchester Library Committee and of the staff who had so bravely endured the rigours of the Cotton Famine years. By this stage WEAA was the Sub Librarian and he had the honour of showing Garrison their precious relic of the first English printer, Caxton's *Golden Legend*.

Twenty-three years later, Garrison's son Francis recalled the momentous occasion in his letter to WEAA, 'I remember my call at the Manchester Library in 1867, with my father & Mr. Barker, & your courteous attentions to us at that time.'[911] Garrison received an ovation at the grand annual meeting of the United Kingdom Alliance, held at the Free Trade Hall. WEAA would have been present. The Mr Barker referred to by Francis Garrison was Thomas Halliday Barker, a founding member of the temperance organisation, United Kingdom Alliance.

Onward Publishing



WEAA's biography of Garrison was published

in 1890 by the Onward Publishing Office, apparently jointly with John Heywood. The Onward Publishing Office was the publishing wing of The Band of Hope temperance movement, aimed at saving children from drink. The Band of Hope started in Leeds in 1847, spread across the Pennines and further, soon measuring membership, mainly young people, in millions. It is still in existence as Hope UK. WEAA was both contributor and in 1871 editor to *The Band of Hope* magazine. From 1865 the movement also published *Onward* and again WEAA was a contributor. The Onward Publishing Office was a significant publisher, well known for the magazines, reciters, music, and book series. The magnificent Onward House building that opened in 1904 is still there on Manchester's Deansgate.

WEAA's biography of Garrison was one of the *Onward Gift and Reward* series, priced eighteen pence and billed as 'very suitable present or reward for a boy.' The book was beautifully bound with the iconic image of the slave breaking his chains. It became popular as a Sunday School prize, but this has unfortunately served to keep it from serious

notice. Modern studies of Garrison make no reference to this very first biography published in Britain. However, giving hope of better appreciation, in Black History Month, October 2012, the book was featured as object of the month at the Working Class Movement Library in Salford.[912]

William Lloyd Garrison: The Story of a Noble Life

There were, as WEAA explained in his preface, two major biographies of Garrison, one being the handsome four volume work produced by his children. But as usual WEAA was concerned that expense and limited free time would prevent many from accessing these, 'Hence the justification for the present attempt to tell on a smaller scale and in moderate compass, the story of a life devoted to the service of humanity. Much of its purpose will have been served if it leads some to seek the fuller information of the works already named.'

Despite the modesty of the aim, WEAA's book is in fact a packed and considered study, certainly not a dimmed down version for a Sunday School child. Having read Mayer's massive 700 pages in *All on Fire* before looking at WEAA's 160 pages, I was astonished at how much of the ground WEAA managed to cover and the clarity with which he addressed the complex conflicts of principles, organisations, and individuals.

The little book is a roll call of the famous names, incidents, and literature of abolition. WEAA neatly encapsulates the main issues of colonization, the impact of legislation such as the Fugitive Slave

Act, the Dred Scott case, the women excluded as delegates at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention at London in 1840, and the failure of European revolutionary exiles in the USA, such as Lajos Kossuth, to even mention slavery. WEAA included less prominent activists like the teacher Prudence Crandall. He had foresight in not neglecting more obscure activists, as in modern times their histories are being rediscovered. WEAA's grasp of history, politics and personalities and his journalistic ability to communicate give even modern readers an accessible way into American history.

The review in the *Manchester Courier* was exactly right, 'it is very full of detail for so small a volume.'[913] The *Guardian* review, written by one of his colleagues, praises the biography as being 'told in a comprehensive manner within reasonable compass' and that the author's clear view both of Garrison and the slavery system ensures 'that the new book is to some extent a history of the course of the Abolition crusade during more than thirty years.' The reviewer adds 'It is needless to say that Mr. Axon deeply reverences the memory of his hero.'[914]

Neal Dow, the American politician, and temperance leader, wrote to WEAA to express his admiration, 'I have just finished it and hasten to tell you that I found it intensely interesting. I knew Mr Garrison well but many things of him in your book exalted him greatly in my estimation of him.'[915] High praise

indeed.

In 1909 the American educator, Eva March Tappan, included an extract in her collection for the *Children's Hour* series, published by Houghton Mifflin.[916] This was a prestigious publication, and it was greatly to WEAA's credit that he was preferred to an American author.

Kitty and Mrs Barboza

The pleasure that WEAA would have taken in the publication of his book was overwhelmed by the illness and then death of his daughter Kitty on 25 October 1890. She had played her own part in the campaign for equality, becoming friends with Mrs M H Garnet Barboza on her visit to England in 1888, fund-raising for the Garnet Memorial School in Liberia.

There are several letters in AP from Mrs Barboza to Kitty. WEAA was likely to be the *Guardian* journalist who reported the visit as follows, 'Mrs. Garnet Barboza is not only the daughter of a negro who achieved distinction, Dr. Henry Highland Garnet, but is herself and educated, fluent and graceful speaker. Naturally she is interested in the education of women, and seeks the aid of philanthropists in Europe to help her in that work. The education of women has lagged behind that of men in Liberia.'[917]

Making Use of the *Guardian*

A modern biography of the African American activist Ida B Wells refers to WEAA as 'the editor of the (Unitarian-oriented) Manchester Guardian.'[918] This mistake arises from Ida's erroneous first reference to him in her autobiography.[919] Later on she referred to him more accurately as one of the editors.

Have a friend on the *Guardian* was a real benefit for African American activists. By now the newspaper had achieved national and international reputation status. As well as a champion in WEAA they had full endorsement from C P Scott for publication of their views, very different from the newspaper's hesitancies of the Cotton Famine period. This role in black rights has been largely overlooked in histories of the newspaper.

WEAA may well have been the first *Guardian* journalist to highlight the evils of segregation. His leader on 28 May 1881 is a factual report on the refusal of hotel accommodation for the Fisk Jubilee Singers and on the rejection of black children from public schools. It is shocking in its starkness and opening statement, 'The colour line has not

disappeared in the United States.' WEAA probably had this information from a direct source for he knew the Fisk Jubilee Singers, receiving a letter of sympathy from them when Kitty died.[920] As he took care to explain, WEAA sought out African Americans on his visits to the United States, 'I took every opportunity of talking with members of the race wherever they were encountered.'[921]

In 2019 the *Guardian* published a history of the Fisk Jubilee Singers under the title 'Spiritual Journey The Freed Slaves who took Gospel to the World,'[922] and included the very incident WEAA had referred to. By publicising such cases journalists like WEAA enabled the fight against discrimination.

The *Guardian* ledgers also cite 'Geo Stephenson DD, A Negro' as the subject of one of WEAA's leaders in 1881 but I have not traced this.

The *Guardian* never failed to report on the most atrocious cases of lynching, garnered from American newspapers and from the indefatigable investigations of Ida B Wells. WEAA was not the only *Guardian* journalist engaged on the theme; there is a London correspondent who seems equally driven, but

WEAA was the one with the friendships and deep understanding of the issues. It is surely WEAA who wrote the leader in 1879 on the mass migration of African Americans from the South, driven out by poverty and fear, and the consequences for the planters ‘who have the cure of the evil in their own hands.’[923]

CHAPTER 27

SUPPORT OF THE STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

Activist and Co-worker

WEAA was a friend both of Ida B Wells, and of her admirer, the Somerset Quaker and seed farmer, Catherine Impey, editor of *Anti-Caste* and, until she resigned over the segregation issue, fellow member of IOGT. He covered their campaigns in the *Guardian* as well as helping to organise their meetings, presiding over some of them. The Axons' home was a welcome base for them on tour. WEAA encouraged both the eminent African American academic, William Sanders Scarborough, and Helen Douglass, second wife of Fredrick Douglass, to write for the *Guardian* and gave advice on their contributions.

These were significant friendships, linked into communities of print, and there were other African Americans who had reason to be grateful for WEAA's guidance, especially when they came as strangers to the UK. WEAA was prominent on activist circuits as a contact point, the man to call upon in emergencies.

What was it about WEAA that appealed to Americans? He had been readily accepted by American librarians and developed friendships with African Americans, earning a rare degree of trust. His visits to the United States in 1893 and 1904 were energetic affairs that WEAA thoroughly enjoyed. Despite his shyness, WEAA had in

abundance the humour, kindness and sprightly conversation that will make friends of strangers.
The stories demonstrate WEAA's ability to empathise with very different individuals and to be sensitive to their hurts at the hands of racists.

Ida B. Wells (1862-1931)
Ida B Wells is a legend in the history of black activism, a courageous fighter for equal rights who never backed down, even when facing assault or the threat of lynching. Born into slavery she forged a remarkable life as journalist, suffragette, and politician, finding time too for a happy marriage and several children who as babies went on the campaign trail with her. Independent and outspoken, her fearless investigations of lynching made some African American men feel shame in comparison.

Ida's 1893 Tour
Her first visit to Britain in April 1893 was at the invitation of Catherine Impey and the Scottish writer, Isabella Fyvie Mayo. Both these women wanted to mobilise public opinion against lynching and Ida was the ideal spokesperson. Frederick Douglass had encouraged his lively young friend to go as he felt too old for the task. Indeed, it proved an extensive and demanding journey, covering seven major cities from Aberdeen to Manchester and finishing unhappily in London with a confrontation with the supposed friend of blacks, the American temperance leader, Frances Willard. Willard and the evangelist Dwight Moody were campaigning in Britain at the same time as Ida but avoided the subject of lynching.

Ida and Catherine Impey stayed with WEAA and Setta in Manchester. All the cities on the tour had responded to the meetings with similar enthusiasm and there was good coverage in the press. Ida related that each city visited established a branch of the new Society for the Recognition of the Brotherhood

of Man. Manchester was no exception. Ida quoted the notice from the *Guardian* of her address to a gathering at the Temperance Hall in Ashton, accompanied by Catherine and WEAA, 'President of the Manchester and Salford Temperance Union, whose guests the ladies are.'[924]

At Catherine Impey's home in Somerset, Ida, 'having been somewhat of a meat eater all my life', was grateful plentiful meat was provided for non-vegetarian guests. Staying with the Axons was a shock, 'there was never any meat of any kind served and it all seemed new and strange to me.'

At the end of the visit a scandal engulfed Catherine Impey, causing a split with Isabella Mayo, as recounted later in this chapter. The tour, which she had supported financially, was cut short. Both WEAA and Ida defended Catherine, Ida ferociously and WEAA more quietly.

Ida wrote to WEAA from Glasgow on 11 May 1893 expressing heartfelt thanks for the kindness of the Axons, gratitude for WEAA's coverage in the *Guardian* and enclosing letters of introduction for the Axons' forthcoming visit to Chicago in June.

Her words to WEAA are particularly poignant for they suggest her loneliness, 'I have no words to express my appreciation of all your kindness and cordial welcome to your house. It will be one of the most delightful memories

I shall take back with me to my – country. I was about to say my home, but I remember I have no home. Yet I have a few friends both in Chicago and at Wilberforce who will welcome you the more heartily if that were possible because of your support of the stranger in a strange land.'[925]

Ida and the Axons next met up again at the Chicago World's Fair in June, an event that was fraught with conflict for African Americans and one critical in their history. Ida's introductory letters for WEAA and Setta brought then into the network.

Ida's 1894 Tour

Ida returned to England in the spring of 1894 as the special correspondent for the Chicago newspaper *Inter-Ocean*. She had new supporters, the popular preacher The Rev. C F Aked and his wife in Liverpool. In Manchester Ida again stayed with the Axons. WEAA chaired one of her meetings. She gave twelve talks in her ten days in Manchester, one in the Town Hall, and one in Ashton. WEAA wrote a detailed *Guardian* notice for this talk which she quoted in her autobiography. She also quoted in full WEAA's impassioned *Guardian* leader of 30 March 1894 on lynch law.

WEAA had written a forceful article, full of controlled anger, 'The hangings, shootings,

burnings of Negroes who have not been convicted of any crime bring disgrace upon the American Nation, and those who take part in these murders or condone them, are the deadliest foes of those free institutions of which America claims to be in a special sense the home.' WEAA detailed the hatred, the race prejudice that survived beyond slavery. Segregation, denial of equal rights, social and legal pressures were brought down to keep the African American in his only acceptable place as 'a hewer of wood and a drawer of water'. Here he may receive 'contemptuous kindliness'. WEAA referred to Ida's talks, 'Her indictment is all the more telling from the absence of rhetoric.' His own leader has the same starkness and must stand as one of the best leaders WEAA ever wrote.[926]

Ida sent WEAA her report of her second tour, published in the newspapers. The Axon family have preserved these cuttings.

14, GROSVENOR ROAD,
BIRKDALE, SOUTHPORT.
Well Replied by
Ida B Wells -
I am across the Atlan
23. VI. 94.
IDA B. WELLS ABROAD.
The Bishop of Manchester on American Lynching.
ITS HORRIBLE CRUELTIES.
England Sympathizes with the African Race.
Attitude of Moody and Miss Willard to the Negroes -- Description of England's "Big Ditch."
MANCHESTER, England, April 4.—Special Correspondence.—Until the first of this year Manchester has been an inland town, thirty miles from the sea. By means of the ship canal she is now in direct connection with the sea, and therefore independent of Liverpool, her great rival in point of size, wealth, etc. Liverpool has for many centuries enjoyed the immense advantage in her situation as a seaport, but Manchester will yet, by her wealth derived from handling the products of other towns and countries, so far eclipse of Manchester will tell you, Manchester, on the other hand, is an enormously manufacturing center. There are over 500 cotton spinning firms in and around the city and there own over 18,000,000 spindles, more than one-third of all those in Great Britain. There are chemical works and great engineering factories, and the export and import trade of these industries is of great magnitude. Liverpool and the railways make their burdens and charges to be borne, besides diverting the trade from Manchester, and the ship canal is the result.
The largest ships bringing produce, coal and iron to the markets and mills need not now wait in vexatious delay outside Liverpool to be docked, but steaming up the canal, reach Manchester as quickly as they can be unloaded from the vessels and onto the railways at Liverpool. In return manufacturers can ship machinery and iron goods to all parts of the world direct from Manchester factories, and at far less cost and delay. Manchester is jubilant at the consummation, and Liverpool correspondingly sad at the loss of this great trade passing unmolested by the "Big
It is more than a mile wide, as will be seen by the most skeptical person who takes a ride along its thirty-five miles of water, and observes what engineering skill and patient plodding have accomplished. Where there was formerly a small stream of water winding in and out toward the sea there is now a broad, deep channel, being the width of the Suez Canal, and any two of the largest vessels afloat can well be together abreast along its waters.
This canal, which has been open to traffic only three months, is the realization of an idea nearly 150 years old, for it was first suggested in 1712. The plan came up for consideration from time to time, until in 1877 it assumed concrete shape, and then a bill was laid before Parliament by a committee of merchants and manufacturers for permission to construct the canal. The bill was bitterly opposed by the dock and railway companies of Liverpool. It took three years to overcome opposition and secure the bill from Parliament; it required another three years to secure sufficient capital to undertake the work and the remaining five years in which to actually do the work and realize the dreams of the promoters. Not only is the canal dotted with ships having freight from all parts of the world, but passenger steamers between New York and Australia go up and down its length, and when the ship canal connects with the Chicago River the ride on this artificial waterway will be much more pleasant than it is at present.
The Queen to Open the Canal.
Her gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria, appreciating the success of this, one of the most splendid of modern undertakings, will come to Manchester in June to formally open the canal. Manchester people are making huge preparations to celebrate the completion of what has cost them $75,000,000, and the celebration promises to be the success so magnificent as unfortunately deserves.
The city proper of Manchester claims nearly 600,000 inhabitants. Her immediate suburban towns, especially Salford, give her a population of a million and a half souls. Though each one maintains its own city government, one cannot easily tell where Manchester ends and Salford, Pendleton, Ancoats, and Ashton begin. The main streets are named after London, for Piccadilly and Fall Mall are as familiar to Manchester citizens as London. Her public buildings, like those of most English cities, require a long time to examine, and also require a long time to get dust and very few know the use of the word. Her art galleries are so arranged that the framed every picture is shown to best advantage, and one has a good chance to pick out names
Cuttings sent by Ida Wells

Like WEAA, she was a skilled journalist, conveying images, information, and emotion in concise and readable text. Both writers were sharply perceptive, giving the unusual details that escape lazier observers. Ida's comments on the Manchester Ship Canal, the city structure, and the art gallery are spot on. She picked up the rivalry with Liverpool, the engineering feats, the fact that, as many have

found, ‘one cannot easily tell where Manchester ends and Salford, Rusholme, Ancots [sic] and Ashton begin’,[927] and the innovation of labels for the paintings in the City Art Gallery. Much of this echoed WEAA’s interests, and of course it was the Axons who took her on these sightseeing trips.

There are only four letters from Ida to WEAA in AP. Confusingly these are filed amongst the 1898 correspondence. No year is given on four letters themselves. However, it is clear from the location and content that one, already cited, is from the first 1893 tour and three from the 1894 tour. These three are predominantly concerned with the setback caused by a Dr Herford.

The Unitarian conference in Manchester failed to pass Ida’s anti-lynching resolution, due to the efforts of the two American delegates, the Reverend Brooke Herford, and Mrs Ormistan Chant. They condemned Ida’s assertions that the press and the pulpit had been compliant in lynching. Ida was not present to refute them and to defend her resolution.

Ida wrote to WEAA from Bristol asking for his help in counteracting the damage through a *Guardian* leader. She believed Dr Herford was WEAA’s friend. Her letter becomes emotional and despairing. The charge of misrepresentation will ‘neutralize and paralyze’ further effort, ‘and nobody knows better than you that it is not true and I would be very glad if you would say it.’[928]

She sounds more cheerful in the next letter for

she has seen Dr Herford, and the matter had been largely resolved, 'I spoke in his church Sunday night and had tea at his house that afternoon. He has not publicly retracted his statement against me but he has by his actions made effort to atone.' She also congratulated WEAA 'over the coming of the little daughter.'[929] Dorothy was born on 28 April 1894, again helping to date the letter to 1894.

Ida's second visit to London on the 1894 tour was a triumph. She prevailed against her opponents and gained powerful supporters, including the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Duke of Argyll. The Manchester Unitarians were 'convinced and ashamed' and passed the resolution they had first rejected.[930]

Much of this was due to the press turning the tide in Ida's favour, and in this they were following WEAA's *Guardian's* lead. An editorial article, *Coloured Women on American Lynchings*, surely by WEAA, succinctly recorded the events, summing up the original failure of the resolution as being on 'tangled points of order.' [931]

The last letter from Ida in AP is a cheerful one from Liverpool as she prepares to depart, 'Are

you surprised to know I am so near you?'[932] She discusses her plans for her next tour through the invitation of the Brotherhood of Man and hopes again to stay with the Axons. In fact, Ida never returned to Europe. In 1918 the State Department denied her a passport when she wished to attend the Peace Conference in Paris.

Catherine Impey (1847-1923)

Catherine Impey knew of WEAA through the vegetarian and temperance movements. It is not clear when they first met but it was probably in the late 1870s. in 1889 Catherine sent him copies of her *Anti-Caste* journal and involved him in Ida's first tour. WEAA joined her Society for the Furtherance of the Brotherhood of Man, through which *Anti-Caste* was published. Founded in 1888, *Anti-Caste* ran for six years, the tiny magazine being distributed through Catherine's network of global contacts, from America, Africa, India through to Australia.

Catherine had visited the USA, met black activists, and become fervent for their struggle to gain equal rights. There were no limits to her visions of equality, and she fought on all fronts, from defending Australian aborigines

through to condemning the caste system in India. Never giving up, she and her sister in their later years, opened their home to WW1 conscientious objectors. The significance of Catherine Impey is now recognised, often with some surprise that this Quaker lady with her extreme views and radical journal, operated from the small Somerset town of Street. Her *Anti-Caste* journal was the first in the UK to feature a photograph of a lynching.

There are nine letters from Catherine Impey to WEAA in AP, running from 1889 to 1894 but they are incredibly hard to decipher. The first letter of 25 February 1889 shows she and WEAA are already friends, and she discusses Mrs Barboza whom WEAA knew. In her next letter in June Catherine is pouring out her traumatic decision to disassociate herself from the IOGT over the issue of segregation. An even more emotional letter arrived a few days later, outlining her feelings on caste and expressing appreciation for WEAA's help. WEAA is most certainly responsible for the several expert reports in the *Guardian* on IOGT. Few could grasp the complex conflicts between the UK and USA leaders. Catherine ends her letter with a very truthful statement,

‘This is a dreadful scrawl – Pen & ink are helping me to make a worse looking letter than usual even!’[933]

Scandal

In 1894 she wrote to WEAA in a rush of upset, referring both to her formal resignation from the IOGT and to the scandal that overwhelmed her during Ida’s first 1893 tour. This scandal had huge ramifications, affecting both *Anti-Caste* and the Furtherance of Brotherhood of Man society. WEAA was on the General Council of this body.

From a modern perspective the outrage seems ridiculous. It is reminiscent of E M Forster’s *A Passage to India*, a tiny incident that is blown up to gigantic proportions. All Catherine did was to write a letter to a young Asian man, one of a number Isabella Mayo supported, mistakenly believing he was in love with her. Dr George Ferdinands took the letter to Isabella Mayo who erupted, declaring Catherine insane and a nymphomaniac. She informed everyone in their circles and demanded Catherine’s resignation from her positions, even including editorship of *Anti-Caste*.

Ida, to her immense credit, stayed loyal to Catherine, declaring with

refreshing common sense that she could not understand why the young man had simply not destroyed the letter. It was also the first time she had encountered the word 'nymphomaniac.' She was disgusted that a woman could write such dreadful things about another woman.

Catherine was understandably traumatised by the public scandal and wrote to friends begging for their understanding. She worried that WEAA like others would believe the 'malignant whisperings'[934] and even worse believe she was mad. She wrote to WEAA on 20 February 1895, 'I suppose you are still under the impression either that I am a little insane or else worse.' She added 'Can you not make some such enquiry to satisfy yourself? It maybe you are not as affected or disaffected as I suppose so I trust you still as a friend and co-worker.'[935]

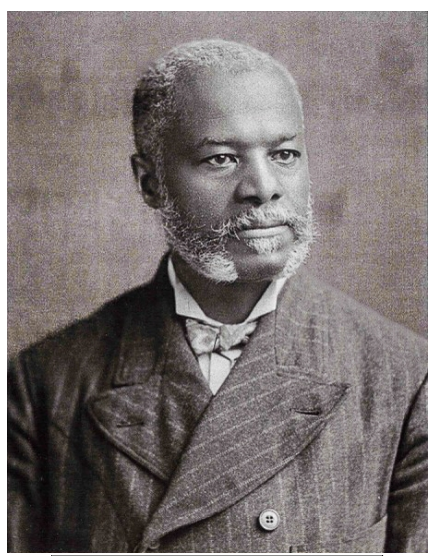
Modern interest in Catherine Impey has brought the AP correspondence with WEAA under scrutiny. Catherine Bressey concluded from the letters that 'their relationship was not so easily healed.'[936] It may well be right that WEAA avoided the emotional quagmire, and did not give Catherine fully stated support but they did continue as fellow campaigners, and mutual friends of visiting African Americans.

Her next letter, and the last in AP, was an urgent request to help a touring lecturer, a Mr Ridings, by organising for his lantern show of educated negro life and getting out press notices. This would be the white American G F Ridings, his talks on *Progress of the Negro since Emancipation* endorsed by Frederick Douglass. Ridings continued his anti-lynching campaign back in the USA, buoyed by British response. He gave full credit to Catherine for being the driving force on his tour.

WEAA and William Sanders Scarborough (1852-1926)

Catherine Impey brought William Scarborough and WEAA together, a true meeting of hearts and minds. As Scarborough recounts in his autobiography Catherine and her sister heard of him and his forthcoming book on Greek grammar[937] on their visit to the USA in 1878. On her return she talked about him to WEAA, 'a man of rare ability and of distinction as an antiquarian and a classicist.' News of Scarborough's Greek grammar had aroused incredulity amongst those who thought no black could ever learn Latin or Greek. WEAA immediately contacted this promising young man, advised him and procured the works essential for furthering his studies.

Scarborough was overwhelmed by this practical kindness, ‘This valuable assistance made it possible for me to make satisfactory preparation of my first philological paper on “The Theory and Function of the Thematic Vowel in the Greek Verb.”’ [938]
Scarborough wrote emotionally of their life-long friendship and how WEAA ‘never flagged in interest or helpfulness for one whom he seemed to consider a protégé as well as friend.’[939]



William Sanders Scarborough

It is regrettable that their early correspondence has not been kept. The AP letters start in 1890, at least ten years after they became corresponding friends. There are thirty-two letters from Scarborough across the 1890 to 1911 period. Only one of WEAA’s letters has been copied and so preserved in AP. This was kept as a record of arrangements for a British tour in 1885. WEAA’s value as

an organiser is apparent. None could surpass WEAA's expertise in detailing the pros and cons of different venues as well as identifying contacts in London and Glasgow.

The lengthy letters from Scarborough are beautifully written, affectionate, and represent a generous sharing of his thoughts and news. It is apparent that WEAA encouraged him to send articles to British newspapers and journals on the 'Negro question' as well as on more scholarly topics for the MLC. WEAA appreciated how Scarborough yearned to discourse with others on classical scholarship and not be confined to the issues of race.
Born into slavery, Scarborough graduated in Liberal Arts at Oberlin College in 1875 as the only black student among the thirty-six on the Classical Course. Next, he taught classical languages at his old school in Macon. When this was burnt down by white supremacists, he became principal of the race school, the Payne Institute in South Carolina. Local Ku Klux Klan outrages, the danger of being prominent, and being regarded as '"educated nigger"' forced Scarborough to leave.

He returned to Oberlin, studied oriental languages for a few months, and then in 1877 was elected to the chair of Latin and Greek at Wilberforce University. Wilberforce was the first privately owned black university founded in 1856.
Scarborough launched himself on a long career at Wilberforce as a professor and then twelve arduous years as president from 1908 to 1920.

Getting an education was hard enough but for a black man to become pre-eminent as a classical scholar was unprecedented. Scarborough had to face gibes, ridicule, and exclusion from some scholarly societies. There were those too in the black community who viewed the classics as a futile and somehow tainted area of study. Even those who wanted the opportunities generated by an academic education could be ambivalent about the classics, so deeply associated with elite white culture.

Scarborough's wife, Sarah Cordelia Briece (1851-1933) was a white divorcee, married briefly at fourteen years old. She was his school principal at Macon, and they were reunited as faculty members at Wilberforce. They married in 1881, embarking on forty-five years of companionship and scholarship.

A Deep Friendship
Classics, oriental languages, folklore, dialect, philology, and equal rights bound Scarborough and WEAA in a deeply personal friendship that gave solace to both.

They both possessed a lighter side, a delight in humour, and a cheery optimism. Scarborough admitted his delight in pranks. Books, music, pleasant friends, and old-fashioned games were his delight. He never smoked or drank and was a strong advocate of temperance. His youthful pupils delighted him; like WEAA he enjoyed sharing scholarship and learning. The Scarboroughs loved having clusters of students in their home or on the lawn. There was always a basket at the door for them to take on departure an apple, orange, or a huge popcorn ball.

Scarborough recounted how WEAA's two-page dedication to him in *William Lloyd Garrison the Liberator,* possibly the first ever dedication to an African American*,* caused more conflict with those who objected to the admission of black scholars to their clubs. As he wrote, 'My friends were delighted at this honour, but my foes…!'.[940]

Distance did not separate the friends. As well as correspondence, the Scarboroughs enjoyed looking at WEAA's papers together, 'We call it our evening with Dr. Axon'.[941]

They met in person in 1893, 1901, 1904 and 1911. Setta and Sarah became good friends too.

The Scarboroughs' first trip to Europe was in 1901, Scarborough being appointed as a delegate to the Ecumenical Conference in London. The Rev. Henry Clubb, President of the American Vegetarian Society, had booked a passage on the same ship, the

Companion, to visit Manchester after an absence of forty-eight years. WEAA asked Clubb to make contact. Scarborough later told WEAA how kind Clubb and his daughter had been. The friendliness after so much racism must have been a cheering start to the trip.

The couple took the opportunity to explore France, Italy, England, and Scotland. WEAA provided them with introduction to the Bodleian librarian, and the Scarboroughs were privileged to be shown some of the greatest treasures. The Axons ensured their visit to Manchester would never be forgotten. They and their fellow delegates were treated royally: at the reception the Lady Mayoress delighted in showing Setta and Sarah the marvellous necklace of gold and ivory, representing the great manufacturers of the city.

The Scarboroughs stayed with the Axons and were give the grand tour of the city, including of course Chetham's, John Rylands, the Free Reference Library, and the De Quincey collection at the Moss Side Library. Scarborough was enthralled, 'I could have spent months among these books with Dr. Axon's enriching knowledge and comment to aid me.'

There was only one complaint. Like Ida B Wells, they were taken aback by the rigid vegetarian regime of the Axon household with no allowances made for carnivorous guests, 'The only drawback was that they were strict vegetarians and we yearned at times for a good beefsteak.'[942]

WEAA's Degree

WEAA was deeply impressed both by Scarborough and by Wilberforce's reputation as a centre for African American education, the key factor as WEAA saw it in healing the race problems. In 1892 in response to a letter

from Scarborough, he appealed to readers of the *Academy* to support Wilberforce University by contributing funds.[943] One of Scarborough's papers had been mentioned in the journal, giving WEAA the opportunity to explain the aims of Wilberforce as well as giving a sketch of Scarborough himself. WEAA emphasised his academic achievements before mentioning his race: interpretation of Aristophanes was more important to WEAA than the colour of anyone's skin. It seems from financial arrangements made with Scarborough that the appeal was successful.

Scarborough revered WEAA as 'a man of rare ability and of distinction as an antiquarian and a classicist.' He knew WEAA regarded him as a protégé but in fact it was Scarborough who conferred on WEAA one of the greatest gifts, the longed-for degree. Private as he was, WEAA had revealed to friends like Bone and Major his sensitivity over the lack of a university education. Both assured him he had achieved so much more. But WEAA was aware of how many regarded those without a degree.
In 1899 as Vice President of Wilberforce University Scarborough gave WEAA his heart's desire, 'One thing I was pleased to do was to be instrumental in bestowing the degree of LL.D. on my learned English friend, Mr. Axon, who established the Axon Prize for the students.'

WEAA now proudly added the letters to his name, sometimes adding Wilberforce University, and became widely known as Dr Axon. It is ironic that one of the leading lights of the RSL, Percy Ames, desperate for a

degree, asked WEAA if he could get him one too. Scarborough pushed it through, trusting and accepting WEAA's recommendation, 'your word is sufficient for one to act.'[944] It is rather a good picture in the light of all the black struggles for careers and acceptance to see Percy Ames go cap in hand to a black university.

Last Meeting

The Scarboroughs returned to Europe in 1911 for what must have seemed a miraculous event, the First Universal Races Congress, held in London with delegates from across the world. Again, they took time to tour Paris and Germany with a brief stay in Manchester.

Their host was Dr Sherwood for Setta had died and WEAA was frail. They took tea with him at William Harrison's home. The sadness of this reunion comes across in Scarborough's account of the conversation with WEAA, 'Mr. Axon was much enfeebled in health. "What shall I do with my library?" he asked. I knew what he felt. I ask myself today, "What shall I do with mine?" His in the end was given to the Manchester College Library. Four days later we took leave of these friends-never to meet them again.'[945]

In fact, in 1913, WEAA appointed Ernest to distribute his books amongst friends, family, societies and institutions. Whether any went to the Manchester College Library is not known. The Unitarian college had relocated variously since its origins in Warrington to

Manchester, York, Manchester again, then London and in 1893 finally to Oxford.}

First Visit to the USA 1893
WEAA visited the USA twice, first in June 1893 as a delegate to the International Vegetarian Congress held during Chicago's World Fair, and then in 1904 to the St Louis Exposition to deliver a paper on libraries.

Setta accompanied him on the first visit and developed her own friendship with the Scarboroughs.

On both occasions being an official delegate was critical as the funding covered travel and expenses, but WEAA did not confine himself to the official roles. Several of his correspondents from different circles wanted to meet him in person. At Chicago he met Dr Poole, the famous devisor of indexes, and visited the Newberry Library. At St Louis he was reunited with temperance and food reform campaigners he had met in Chicago or had corresponded with.

The opportunity to experience at first hand the country he had read and written about must have been incredibly exciting. C P Scott extended WEAA's leave on both occasions, writing in relation to St. Louis, 'it would be a pity not to stay for the Congress.'[946]

WEAA wrote three related articles on the trip to Chicago in the *Vegetarian Review*.[947] He, Setta, and the party of vegetarians visited New York, Philadelphia, and Washington before reaching Chicago. WEAA described it all in detail, from the Atlantic crossing to the Chicago Fair. He wrote at length of their visit

to the Rev. Henry. S. Clubb at the Bible Christian Church in Philadelphia. It was here that WEAA, Setta, and the other members of the party ceremonially planted a hemlock fir tree as a bond between vegetarians in America and England. WEAA fondly adds that Setta's planting 'was last and best.' Clubb later reassured WEAA that the tree was green and flourishing. They must have taken the tale of the tree back home. Cara Baker, the great great great granddaughter of WEAA's adopted brother, Albert Axon, researched a family legend of WEAA's planting a tree in the grounds of an American Church.[948] The Church confirmed the tree was remembered.

WEAA concentrated on travel in these three articles, skipping over the Vegetarian Congress as that had been reported elsewhere, and giving only a brief account of the Fair itself. Instead, he took a professional interest in comparing the American and British press, casting an eye on the parks as well as municipal corruption, women's clubs, railways, employment, and statues. With Victorian monuments becoming a battle ground in the twenty-first century it is refreshing to find WEAA's opinion, 'The

Americans strive to honour their dead worthies, and indeed do not confine their monuments to the native born, but it cannot be said that in statuary they are any more successful than ourselves. An artistic autocrat bent on purifying the public taste, would order the instant destruction of many of the monuments that are now supposed to ornament the public places of Great Britain and the United States.' [949]

WEAA took to travel writing with professional ease and with very human excitement. There are humorous touches, but these are not overdone, and his colourful depictions of characters and events are engaging. This, for example, is his quick view of evangelical preachers in training, 'The students were, for the most part, a hearty lot of young fellows, who managed to combine fun and piety in uncertain proportions.'[950] WEAA's text has a bustle and rush that mirrors the speed of his trips over vast distances.

But from the perspective of this chapter what is real gold is the five-page concluding section where he describes his quest to meet with African Americans, first whoever he encountered enroute, mainly artisans and waiters, and then at Chicago 'some of the race who were of higher standing and education.' WEAA writes in admiration of the courage of 'My friend, Miss Ida B. Wells' who was amongst

them and firmly emphasises in his article the ‘respect and honour’ in which she was held for some had tried to damage her reputation. He and Setta attended a reception and met there Frederick Douglass and his second wife, Helen Douglass, the poets Mrs. Frances E. W. Harper and Paul Dunbar. It is amazing to think of WEAA’s giving his address on vegetarianism to such a company, but they accorded him ‘a friendly reception.’

> The official report describes the event as follows, ‘On June 8 Mr. and Mrs. Axon were invited to an informal reception, by the “coloured” people of Chicago, and were accompanied by Mr E.C. Clark, to an interesting gathering of clergymen, lawyers, doctors, authors, &c., all of the negro race. After addresses from Hon. Fred Douglass and others, Mr. Axon was called upon to respond, and incidentally showed how Vegetarianism might help in mitigating social prejudice.’[951]

The full title for the World Fair was ‘The World’s Columbian Exposition’. Like the 1851 Crystal Palace in London, its legend encompasses the history of the times. The Chicago World Fair is still analysed for what it reveals of attitudes to ethnicity, black rights, African American education, and segregation. It remains notorious for the anthropological freak show and the bitter splits over the segregated Jubilee Day on 25 August to celebrate African American achievements. Many African Americans boycotted the event, and their fears were realised by the mockery of the watermelons stands and an ‘Aunt Jemima’ mammy. WEAA had returned home by then and he did not comment on any of the conflicts, merely remarking that, ‘Many exhibits, also, were interesting from an anthropological and sociological point of view.’ He devotes far more text to the analysis of Mrs Harper’s novel and one of Paul Dunbar’s poems than to the Fair. It is almost as if WEAA had reached the limit of his

comfort zone.

But what did overwhelm WEAA was the lynching that occurred while he was in Chicago and this he does confront, ending his series of articles with a passionate denouncement of the evil, 'Thousands of negroes have been murdered – "lynched" by whites since Emancipation and of these myriad murderers only three have been condemned to death for their crime. There was a lynching within the distance of a ride of an hour or two from Chicago while we were at the World's Fair. These things are a dark stain on American civilisation and bring deep distrust upon her free institutions.'

On their return voyage on S.S. Arizona, WEAA wrote a prologue poem for the Seamen's Charities Entertainment, looking forward to home and grateful to the sailors who are taking them safely landward. One verse sums up WEAA's outlook,

'What is the best that human life can give?
To live in peace and help each other live.
Take aid when needed with a thankful heart
And when we can a generous help impart'[952]

Paul Laurence Dunbar

The Chicago encounters expanded WEAA's network even further. He and Setta had proved themselves trustworthy, and it was natural for African Americans visiting the UK to contact them. In 1899, for example, the Rev. Dr Snelson, born of slave parents and now Chief Superintendent of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Sierra Leone, was touring Europe to raise awareness of his mission. He was with two young men, educated in Freetown, and now enroute to complete their education at Wilberforce

University. Both boys had classical as well as industrial training so no doubt would soon be under the Scarborough's protecting wings. Dr Snelson's appeal to WEAA for 'any help you can render'[953] would not have gone unanswered.

Chicago brought friendship with two further remarkable Americans, one of whom was African American and the other married to an African American.

Paul Laurence Dunbar was a twenty-year old poet, his parents had both been enslaved and he struggled to gain an education at high school, supporting himself and his widowed mother. WEAA devoted two whole pages in his *Vegetarian Visit to Chicago*[954] report to quoting one of his amusing poems, written in what has been described as 'artistic negro dialect.' [955] Dunbar was fortunate to meet his hero Frederick Douglass at Chicago for the great man took him under his wing. In 1897 Dunbar came to England on a literary tour, giving readings on the London circuit. There are three letters from Dunbar to WEAA, all underlining WEAA's complex role and the value of his help. WEAA provided practical advice, secured publicity through his articles, suggested channels for publication and even

on slight acquaintance was a trusted confidant. Dunbar received advice for his tour, was grateful for WEAA's notice in the *Guardian* and 'for something in *The Avenue* which I know came through your influence.'[956]

Both Scarborough and Dunbar wanted news of a mysterious Miss Brown who was causing sensation in England with dramatic presentations. Both expected the knowledgeable WEAA to have up to date information. WEAA certainly knew of her as he had mentioned a Miss H L Brown in his letter to Scarborough of 1 November 1894. Dunbar confided his struggles to WEAA, 'I feel as I have always felt that the time was not yet ripe for me to come to England but who wants to return on his shield unless there are some holes in the shield to indicate at least one fight?'[957] Finally he writes of severing the contact with a Miss P with the telling comment, 'She mistook me for a Vaudeville actor.'

Dunbar died of tuberculosis in 1906, only thirty-three years old. By then WEAA had left the *Guardian* and whoever wrote the memorial

notice for Dunbar made it flat and uninspiring. What a contrast with the richness, immediacy, and interest that WEAA conveyed through his notice in 1897. Here Dunbar comes to life, his writings placed in their literary contexts, the tension between dialect and mainstream perceptively teased out and the verse WEAA quoted again placed in the context of human comedy. He paid tribute to Dunbar's struggles, to his sense of beauty and serious thoughts, ending with notice of the tour and 'He has certainly contributed a new element to the literature of the day.'[958] This notice is attributed to 'A Correspondent' but references in AP identify WEAA as the author.

Helen Douglass
The other remarkable American friend was not an African American but a white woman, Helen Douglass, Frederick Douglass's second wife. Widowed by Frederick's death in 1895, she was left alone to face the hatreds that this interracial marriage generated both in the white and the black community.

The gracious Scarborough felt none of this antagonism, describing her to WEAA as 'a noble woman, she was the worthy wife of a worthy husband.'[959] Ida B Wells was distressed by the discourtesy Helen endured from African American women. The young Ida's deference towards Helen had been an

important element in her friendship with Frederick Douglass. She wrote honestly in her autobiography that she would have preferred Frederick to have married 'one of the beautiful, charming colored women of my race' but 'it was outrageous that they should be crucified by both white and black people for so doing.'[960] Ida fully admired Helen's quiet endurance as a widow and her determination to keep their home Cedar Hill as a museum. The family overturned the will leaving the house to her on a technicality and Helen struggled with a mortgage to pay off the heirs.

Given the difficulties of her situation, it is a tribute to the Axons that Helen trusted them after only a brief acquaintance in Chicago. There are eight letters in AP dated from 1896 to 1900: she died in 1903. These cast an interesting light on her feelings and on contemporary affairs. She contacted WEAA as a *Guardian* editor, seeking advice on promoting her husband's memorial volume. Then in 1899, she wrote in distress about the position of coloured people in America, sounding him out on the feasibility of a lecture tour in England, 'my chief encouragement is

your influence as one of the directors of English thought and your knowledge of the temper of the English people.'[961]

She reacted with sadness when WEAA advised against the idea but also with appreciation of his honesty. WEAA had consulted his contacts. There is a repulsive letter to WEAA from The Howard Association in London, marked private and with an illegible signature. The correspondent advised strongly against the visit, especially because Helen Douglass was the white widow of a black man. He then raged about the 'miraculous stupidity' of coloured people in the southern states and their inability to help themselves.[962] It is an incoherent rant. There were two different Howard Associations at the time, one British, later the Howard League for Penal Reform, and one American, still providing relief in the southern states. The '5 Bishopgate-street-without' address on the letter confirms this is the British one.

Helen's confidence in WEAA as an advisor was absolute. She had mooted the idea of a visit in July 1899 during the build-up to the South African War. With extreme patriotism running rampant and the *Guardian* standing out against

war fever it is understandable why it would not be good timing for a tour. Helen wrote back with dignity, 'but if there is no English sentiment or you are too busy with Oom Paul, or afraid of disturbing international harmony, - why, we will hope that some David is already choosing smooth stones from the brook, for old Goliath's attack.' [963] She enclosed her article for the *Guardian*. Later she returned a money order, presumably for this article, explaining she could not risk being seen to do this for money. She clearly expected WEAA to understand her plain speaking, 'I feel that there is a tacit understanding that we are to speak very plainly to each other and may do so without offence.'[964] Her praise for the *Guardian* is absolute, 'the noble adherence of the *Guardian* & its principles during the present trying year.'[965] And again in her next letter, 'When the passions of man are cooled may the noble attitude of the Guardian be recognised.'[966] In the same letter she forcefully dismissed the whole stupidity of racism, 'I get disgusted with Southern twaddle on the "race question", and some Northern twaddle too.' The final letter in AP is

remarkable for all she discussed; WEAA's lecture on temperance, the imminent Jim Crow laws, and her contempt for the Mayflower Society that despised her. The extent to which she trusted WEAA is remarkable.

The Nation

WEAA was a regular reviewer and contributor to yet another print community, the legendary American weekly magazine, *The Nation*. There is no mystery as to how this came about. *The Nation*, a major newspaper with a strong voice for civil rights, was founded in 1865 by William Lloyd Garrison's son Francis and other abolitionists. His father had decided the purpose for which his famous newspaper, the *Liberator*, had been created had now been achieved with emancipation and closed it down. *The Nation* took its place.

Nothing speaks more of the regard with which WEAA was held than this journalistic link across the Atlantic. Most of WEAA's pieces were literary contributions for the Bookman column and the editors occasionally rejected some as too esoteric for their American readers.

WEAA wrote an article on John Brown for *The Nation,* but I have not been able to trace whether they printed this. It was probably much the same text that was published by the

MLC; a review of Oswald Garrison Villard's new study of John Brown, followed by WEAA's own sympathetic interpretation of his history. It is interesting to see how WEAA, the pacifist, confronts Brown's murderous actions. In fact, WEAA gives an immensely stirring account, understanding how the evils of slavery determined Brown's violent course. WEAA points out that Brown's 'Calvinistic training led to his conviction that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.' WEAA's attitude was that whatever John Brown's faults, his courage, especially as he faced execution, could not be denied, and his action became the battle cry that ended slavery. As ever, WEAA's account is immensely readable, rich in content, and lightened by wry commentary like this, 'The Americans have a talent for the manufacture of constitutions and like to perform even illegal acts decently and in order.'[967]

Wearing his bibliophile hat, WEAA picked up the point that the *Columbian Reciter* inspired John Brown, 'His education was scanty, and "the books which influenced him" were chiefly the Bible and the "Columbian Reciter," - the latter a book on which many fluent orators

have been nourished.' WEAA was surely referencing Frederick Douglass and Willian Lloyd Garrison: both had devoured this collection of speeches, absorbing style and content. Few such modest books can so have transformed history.

This article is amongst WEAA's finest writing, and although objective reveals the deep emotions he felt on the whole tragic history of American slavery and its aftermath.

CHAPTER 28

THE LIBRARY IN RELATION TO KNOWLEDGE AND LIFE

Still A Librarian

The AP correspondence indicates that WEAA maintained his high level of activity in the library sphere throughout the 1890s and 1900s. He was involved at a local, national, and international level. A selection of his key activities is covered in this chapter.

WEAA and Crestadoro were founder members of the LA in 1877, and WEAA remained prominent in the organisation for the rest of his life. This was unusual as he was no longer a public librarian and that was usually a prerequisite for holding office in the LA.

His position as office librarian at the *Guardian* did not really count and most LA members were unaware of this role. One later commentator wrote, 'Axon represents yet another librarian who, while forsaking our profession for another, retained sincere affection for his first love during the remainder of his life.'[968] WEAA never referred to the post for his LA credentials, selecting instead one of his other roles, such as Hon. Member Salford Library Committee or Hon. Secretary of the MLC. Ironically, the 200th anniversary of the *Guardian* led to a highlighting of the office librarian role with mention of WEAA's appointment as office

librarian in 1874 and his likely involvement in the newspaper index.[969]

Library Association Circuit

The LA gradually crafted a complex arrangement of annual meetings, conferences, and branch meetings, sometimes split across different dates. WEAA attended most of them. He was mentioned at the 1909 conference as 'among the original members' along with Sutton and the late Dr Crestadoro.[970] WEAA and Sutton must have felt ancient.

The conference venues across England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland extended knowledge of local libraries for LA members. WEAA's research into Welsh literature was stimulated by new contacts with librarians at the National Library of Wales and Cardiff Public Libraries.

There was always a strong presence of Lancashire librarians in the LA, mitigating the growing London bias of the organisation. Amongst the 'considerable contingent from Lancashire'[971] were faces familiar to WEAA, including at various stages Alderman Harry Rawson, Charles Sutton, his deputy William Credland, Henry Guppy of John Rylands Library, and Henry Tennyson Folkard of Wigan Free Libraries.

Papers and Overwork

WEAA presented several provocative papers

related to his library campaigns. His paper at Aberdeen in 1893 was announced as follows, 'a highly interesting and suggestive paper will be read by Mr W. E. A. Axon, of Manchester on The place of Libraries in Relation to Elementary, Secondary, and higher education.'[972]

Yet WEAA was primarily a bibliophile and there is a sense of dwindling interest at the LA in such esoteric topics as he enjoyed. At Buxton, he gave a paper on the English and Welsh translation from Martial held as a unique 1571 broadside at Chetham's. WEAA had identified the translator as the bard, Simwnt Fychan. His enthralled delving into Welsh literature eventually earned WEAA a bardic degree. The future LA President, J. Y. W. MacAlister, already rising to prominence, was rather patronising in his comment that notes of this kind should be encouraged, 'affording as they did curious peeps into the by-ways of literature.'[973]

With the turn of the century hints start to appear in AP that WEAA needed to cut down on his commitments. He was suffering health problems in the summer of 1903. Meta Gaskell

expressed her concern in a letter of 3 June, begging him not to overwork, 'Do take to heart my words about your health and work.'[974] The LA Secretary, Lawrence Inkster, wrote to him on 9 June that he was sorry to hear WEAA was considering retiring from the Council, 'I hope you will re-consider the matter.'[975] This might have been prompted by pique as WEAA was annoyed at not having a reply about a paper he had submitted. Inkster hastily explained that he had been ill and the Publications Committee rather overwhelmed. WEAA did continue and earned himself an honorary position. In 1910 WEAA and Charles Sutton, both long- standing officials on the LA executive, became Vice-Presidents.

Library Campaigns

Over the years WEAA tenaciously pursued his pet issues at the LA conferences and the monthly meetings. Some were resolved one way or another in his lifetime.

As described previously, WEAA was one of the leaders in the controversial campaign for Manchester free libraries to be open on Sundays. Victory came in September 1878. Even in recent times WEAA is remembered for this; a correspondent in the *Guardia*n, referred to him as the *Guardian* Librarian and

highlighted his major role in the Sunday opening of libraries.[976]

From the very start, the free libraries reported detailed statistics to their Councils. There was a continual need to convince Councillors and ratepayers of progress and value. The drawback was the lack of uniformity in how statistics were treated. WEAA zoned in on this, and his talk at the MSS in 1875 was published as an influential pamphlet, *On some Defects in the Statistics of Books and Libraries*.[977] WEAA proposed and then, together with Sutton, founded a Statistical Section for the LA.

WEAA characteristically approached problems, whether major or minor, from both a librarian's and a reader's perspective. He knew the frustration of being debarred from information, whether through lack of funds, inadequate catalogues, or bureaucratic rules. His mission as a library campaigner was to knock down barriers to information. Some of his ideas were realised decades later: some, although worthy, have fallen by the wayside.

The ALA's *Library Journal* reported WEAA's criticism of the BML's housekeeping practice of annual collation, collecting the current issues of a periodical for a year, and then binding together. As WEAA pointed out, readers normally wanted to see recent issues, not to be deprived of them for a year.[978] This annoying practice, for the benefit of librarian

rather than reader, lingered on in some BL categories into the twenty-first century.

WEAA fought for the interests of the provincial free libraries. He observed that readers were unable to benefit from the London centric BML. WEAA described how readers wasted time and money without adequate catalogues, travelling to the BML only to find the books they wanted were not there. WEAA was a committed disciple of Crestadoro's vision of global access and universal catalogues. Much of what they imagined has now been achieved with automation and co-operation, especially with WorldCat, the product of OCLC. The online BL catalogue and ordering system would have brought joy to Crestadoro and WEAA. [This was written before the tragic impact of the cyber-attack of October 2023.]

He agitated for the provision of Parliamentary Papers to provincial libraries, perhaps using the sets that went to MPs. As one supporter pointed out, 'an entire set of the Journals, etc., weighing about two tons, [was] usually sold to a waste-paper dealer by the butler.'[979] WEAA was absent from the 1911 LA annual meeting when Sutton presented their joint motion on the extension of the gratuitous deposit of Parliamentary Papers. There was support but nothing ever came from this beyond pressure on MPs to donate their sets.

National Bibliography

WEAA long contended the need for an official national bibliography and furthermore one that included much neglected ephemera. He repeatedly complained that readers were thwarted by the lack of a properly indexed national bibliography based on the Copyright Acts.

WEAA's radical call for action on a national bibliography was presented on his behalf at the twentieth Annual Meeting in October 1897, held at the Society of Arts, London. Many agreed with WEAA's proposal in the discussion that followed.
WEAA's absence was understandable. He had already attended the Second International Library Conference, held in London in July 1897, and this was a very busy period for him on the De Quincey, Moss Side Library, and vegetarian front.

His ill health prevented him being at the LA conference in Liverpool in 1912 and Sutton read his paper on the subject. The *Guardian* gave two-thirds of its report to their ex-colleague's speech, including the impressive statistical analysis that was his trademark.
It was not until 1 December 1949 that 'six people gathered outside a bomb-damaged house in Russell Square in London'[980] to start work on the British National Bibliography. There is no mention in the only full history of the enterprise, from which this quotation is taken, of WEAA or of other pre-1926 pioneers.

Library Assistants
WEAA took a new direction in this period, becoming involved with the Library Assistants' Association (LAA) and its North-western Branch in particular.

The LAA, founded in 1895, was intended to give library assistants both practical and theoretical training. It had a London focus with the vague intention of 'The formation of Branch Bodies in the Provinces.' Certainly the 'Provinces' were keen to be independent and the North-Western Branch was established in 1899 with Manchester, not London, as a centre.

All the usual names, from Alderman Harry Rawson through to Charles Sutton, appear as the leading lights in the North-West Branch and then in the succeeding Manchester Fellowship. The lively activities and discussions provided informal training, and stimulated the demand for professional qualifications, an aim enthusiastically supported by WEAA and his friend Thomas Greenwood amongst others. There were regular meetings, visits to libraries, talks, summer schools and prizes, assistants being trusted to write and submit their essays without consulting any books. In 1909 the Summer School opened at the Wigan Public Library with WEAA delivering the introductory lecture on cataloguing. He praised the library and the catalogue 'upon which Mr. H. T. Folkard, F.S.A., had spent so much skill and industry.'[981]

Personal Library
On the Saturday afternoon of 9 November 1900, WEAA held a 'Literary Reception' for the North-western Branch. He welcomed the young people to 6 Cecil Street, expressing warm fellow feeling as an ex- assistant himself, and with a smile complaining that the association was not there in his time.

The two-page report in *The Library Assistant* affords a unique glimpse of the Axons at home

and of WEAA's precious personal library, including its 'literary curiosities.'[982] He had collected many rarities as examples of the history of printing. WEAA guided the assistants through a selection, including a Strasburg Press book, dated 1483 and a Spanish jestbook presented to Coleridge and then owned by Southey. There were works in West European, Armenian, and Arabic languages as well as in 'homely and gradely Lancaster.' There were autograph letters (now in JRL), various manuscripts as well as one of the smallest books extant. WEAA talked about bibliography, pointing out the rich, unexplored field of English books printed in India. The 'library proper' encompassed some eight to ten thousand books, all classified by Dewey, WEAA being the first to do so in the UK for a private collection. According to WEAA, he had manged this at the phenomenal rate of 5000 books in just one week.[983]

However, many of his books were in constant use and placed conveniently to hand 'somewhat modifying the niceties of class-distinctions.' This was the privilege of being a private collector as WEAA explained to the amused assistants. It was clearly a happy occasion as 'that charming hostess Mrs Axon and her dainty little daughter' gracefully dispensed tea. The event was enhanced by the presence of WEAA's friend, Mr Green of Moss Side Library.

WEAA is described in the article as 'a gentleman whose name is a

household word in Manchester- nay Lancashire literary circles.' The visit to his hospitable home and to his marvellous library must have become a treasured memory for the assistants.

Library Lectures

WEAA was active as a lecturer throughout his life. It is now difficult to trace the actual occasions let alone the texts. Talking was as natural to him as writing and he covered the same range of topics in a variety of venues from penny clubs to pulpits, from Vegetarian Summer Schools to the grand rooms hired or owned by the literary societies. By all accounts his talks were entertaining, heavy ground being covered lightly. His voice was rich, deep, and attractive. He had ambitions as a speaker and did earn fees but not as substantially as he had once hoped. In 1908 WEAA bitterly recalled how experience had dashed his hopes, in one sphere at least. He told Walter Butterworth of the Art Gallery Committee that:

> 'A good many years ago I had a thought of adding professional lecturing to my literary work and in my innocence I imagined the Mosley St. authorities might like to vary their importations with a little local product. I wrote one year & was told I was too late. I wrote the next year & was told I was too early. Or was it the other way about? I heard nothing more in all the intervening years and I made no more suggestions.'[984]

At the very first LA annual conference held in Oxford in 1878, WEAA gave a paper, *Professorships of Bibliography*. Quoting extensively from Emerson and Carlyle, he

promoted the idea of academics to guide inexpert readers through the vast fields of literature, avoiding errors and illusions. The discussion that followed was lukewarm. Those commenting had little idea of the pitfalls the self-educated like WEAA had encountered.

In an undated article from a local newspaper, preserved in the MLC scrapbook, WEAA expounded in a similar way on the value of library lectures. This article is the only one I have found where WEAA describes the downside of self-education, or an education limited to the basics. He was concerned to spare those seeking knowledge the waste of precious free time. Short library lectures, given by those with bibliographic expertise, were, he proposed, the best means of ensuring readers were directed to the most helpful books. Even more significantly WEAA thought the lecturer should help to develop 'that process of inquiry, comparison, acceptance and rejection of the views of many minds by which an independent judgement is formed.' The object was not to save people the trouble of reading but to ensure the best use was made of public libraries. WEAA saw retired volunteers providing this guidance. It is a far-sighted article, pertinent to our troubled online world.

There is a strong personal note too in his recollection of misguided delving:

> 'In looking back we must all regret the precious hours wasted over poetasters, pseudo-philosophers, inexact and dull historians, and dry-as-dust biographers, which might have been so delightfully employed in listening to the world's greatest poets, to the historians who make the dead past live again, and to the biographers who show the real relation of an individual atom to the great sea of humanity.'

Typically, WEAA was also keen to point out that it is not a simple matter of good or bad material, 'Whitaker's Almanac and Bacon's

Essays are both good books but the result of their mental assimilation would certainly not be the same.'[985]

Most libraries now produce lists of recommended reading and organise talks on the collections. These are very much in the spirit of WEAA's idea but do not go as far as he envisioned.

Internationalist
WEAA was respected both as a scholar and a librarian in Europe. He was known not only through the library network but through the vegetarian and temperance movements, linguistics, and folklore. He had long cultivated links with librarians in the USA.

Before the new LA launched its own publications, the *Library Journal* was the official organ for both the ALA and LA, the main source of news for British activities. His name appeared from the start of the ALA's *Library Journal* in 1877 with listings of his recent publications, his speeches at meetings, reports of his activities, and publication of his articles like the lengthy *Projected Universal Catalogue, Notes on Chinese Libraries* and *Poetry of the Bibliomania.* He also had the role of Assistant or Associate Editor. The *Library Journal* has titbits of new information about WEAA. For example, there is a reference in the first issue to WEAA's producing a catalogue for the Macclesfield Free Library.[986] In the same issue there is an account of how WEAA's

proposal in *N&Q* led to the MLC's scheme to record the works of the provincial press.

The *Library Journal* covered his campaign to have Parliamentary Papers more widely distributed in the provinces. Whilst English colleagues might be taken aback by his 'sweeping censure,'[987] WEAA's forthright style seems to have appealed to the Americans. They were also happy to publish his more scholarly papers on subjects like *Sir John Chesshyres's Library at Halton, in Cheshire*. Although Melvil Dewey, the managing editor, did explain to WEAA that they preferred less history, 'The Historical we are glad of as a sample, but we care much more for the practical & no one writes articles for the Journal that are more welcome than yours.'[988]

The Americans liked WEAA, recognising that he would turn ideas into action. The *Library Journal* commented on his proposal for a bibliographic section at MLC, 'The prominent part which Mr. Axon will take in the Manchester section is guarantee that it will be well done.'[989]

WEAA first met American librarians in 1877 on their trip to

Manchester prior to attending the Conference of Librarians in London. He remained in touch with them through correspondence, meetings at LA and other conferences where American as well as European librarians were regular attendees.

Whilst librarians journeyed from other countries to engage with Britain, few British librarians were willing to reciprocate. James Yates, of Leeds Free Libraries, was the only one in the UK to accept the ALA's invitation to the 1876 Conference of Librarians held in Philadelphia at the Centennial Exhibition. WEAA was another northerner who welcomed international networking. This was a critical factor in the choice of WEAA as delegate to the St Louis World Fair in 1904.

The St Louis World Fair 1904

Officially purposed to celebrate the centenary of the Louisiana purchase, the enormous scale of this event made it a global paean to consumerism and the modern world.

The facts and figures are stunning; over 1500 buildings on 120 acres of ground, 75 miles of roads and water ways, and sixty countries participating. There were the same conflicts over the exhibition of 'primitive races' that had blighted the Chicago World Fair and little credit given to the African American designers and builders. Startlingly a woman, Florence Hayward, managed to get a place on the hitherto all male Board of Directors Board. A riot exploded over the banning of the bullfight and the arena was burnt down. Vast military spectacles recreated battles of the Boer War. State-of-the art developments in science, technology, communications, medicine, foods, were all show-cased at St Louis, fortune telling of how modern life would progress.

The St Louis World Fair was on a cusp between the two centuries: the icons of the fast distancing past were there whilst some of the young attendees would have impact on the new age. The schoolboy T S Eliot, born and bred in St Louis, was fascinated by the interactions of different cultures in the race exhibitions, drawing him to study anthropology at Harvard. The old man Geronimo was on display in the Ethnology exhibit and ragtime filled the air. The Exposition ran from 30 April to 1 December with an assortment of associated events.

Delegate

One of these associated events was the International Congress of Science and Arts, held 19 to 25 September. Three professors from the Congress Committee, Simon Newcomb (described as the most famous scientist in America), Professor Small of Chicago and Hugo Munsterberg, had previously spent four months in Europe, selecting speakers from renowned scholars and scientists. They had invited WEAA to be an official speaker at the Library Congress section, his expenses funded by the Congress, 'Amongst the names of those whose presence is especially desired at Congress, yours occupies a prominent place.' [990]

Yet WEAA was the second choice as delegate.

Given the prominence of London and the BML, it is not surprising that Dr Richard Garnett was the first choice as delegate for the International Congress. Not only was he the outstanding BML superintendent, a prime mover for the BML printed catalogue, but he was LA President in 1893 and famous for his talks and essays. He also was a creative writer: his *Twilight of the Gods* is still admired.

Garnett declined the invitation, and quite likely proposed WEAA as a worthy alternative. Garnett and WEAA had corresponded regularly since both were young men, mainly on bibliographic and publishing matters, often arranging to meet up for a gossip. They admired Edward Edwards and took part in commemorating him. Garnett and WEAA were bookmen with huge respect and liking for each other. There was a continual exchange of favours and information in the letters. For example, Garnett contributed to WEAA's *Book Lore* and WEAA consulted Garnett when he was considered applying for a BML appointment in 1885. Garnett wrote informally and with humour, enjoying the friendship. It is easy to imagine they never stopped talking when they attended fun events like the 'Biographical Dinner.'[991]

Whether Garnett suggested him or not, WEAA was an obvious choice. He had established a reputation in the UK, American and Europe as an outstanding speaker and writer on libraries. He was a linguist, an internationalist and a man who saw no barriers between cultures. He had phenomenal knowledge that he made his life's work to communicate.

Many would remember his article, *The Projected Universal Catalogue*, published the *Library Journal*.[992] WEAA examined the

practicalities of what was regarded as ‘a fantastic scheme, visionary as the search after the absolute or the philosopher’s stone.’ He came up with a perfectly achievable plan, depending on international agreement and a few key libraries. WEAA’s vision of international co-operation sprang from his belief in humanity, and he never gave up. His confidence in libraries co-operating to produce a world catalogue was justified. International co-operation in the library world has never faltered.

Reactions

After a visit from Professor Newcomb to deliver the invitation, WEAA excitedly applied to C P Scott for permission to take his holiday in September 1904, sweetening his request by offering a *Guardian* article on the Congress, ‘It [the Congress] will I think be the biggest thing that has ever been done in that line.’[993] In his draft letter, WEAA added he was second choice after Dr Garnett who was unable to go, but then wisely crossed this out. C P Scott agreed he should take his holiday ‘to discharge the very honourable duty’ but felt there should be other coverage of the Exposition, ‘we may

have to do something more extensive.'[994] There were perhaps more attractive aspects at the Exposition than libraries and bibliography. Scott with his usual generosity urged WEAA to take leave from 6 September to 16 or 17 October, 'It would be a pity not to stay for the Congress.'[995]

The news spread rapidly. Percy Ames of the RSL, impressed by WEAA's role as official speaker, asked whether he would represent RSL on the visit. WEAA was clearly in a good mood with the prospect of the trip and meeting up with his American friends. A very rare personal snippet is preserved in AP, evidence of WEAA's light heart at the time. The Chetham's Librarian, Walter T Browne, had found his gloves, returning them with a rhyme,

I found your "gage"
Upon the floor –
But I'll not wage
With you a war-
But like a peaceful governing Wight
Just leave the Japs + Russ to fight'.

WEAA's card is attached with his reply, 'If I stood in the poets' ranks, I'd build a lofty rhyme, which should declare my hearty thanks, until the end of time But though that gift I cannot claim My thanks are hearty all the same.'[996]

E G Hawke, WEAA's former *Guardian* colleague, was now seeking work. He asked WEAA to look out for opportunities for him as

a London correspondent for American newspapers, ‘a personal recommendation from you would do more good than any number of letters of application.’ He also wished WEAA a good trip, commenting, ‘I know how much you are interested in that country.’[997]

Folkard, the Wigan librarian, wished him well on the trip, adding the hint, ‘If you come across any Mining books or Catalogues think of Wigan!’[998]

Library Sessions

There was a horrible moment where it looked as if the Library Section of the Congress might be cancelled as the ALA had decided to hold a parallel session. Newcomb rapidly reassured WEAA by cable that the Congress had voted to retain the section. The Congress and the ALA combined forces in organising their sessions, attended by 600 participants from seventeen countries.

Momentous Gathering

These alarms overcome, WEAA was present at a pivotal moment in science and information history. He was surely enthralled by the hot issues, expert as he was in the problems of library classification. The structure of the Congress itself was an attempt primarily by Hugo Munsterberg to classify the sciences, to create a sort of ground plan of knowledge. This aroused hostility from thinkers like John Dewey who wanted open fields of enquiry and

the breakdown of artificial boundaries, particularly those conjured up by committees. The heated debates between Munsterberg and Dewey in the pages of *Science* and *Atlantic Monthly* also encompassed the desirability or otherwise of the presence of European scholars. The controversy has been captured online.[999]

The Congress was epoch-making in library history: it is now regarded as a precursor of the International Federation of Library Associations. WEAA must have been proud to be one of the three speakers at this innovative gathering. His colleagues were F M Grunden of the St Louis Public Library and Dr Guido Biagi of the Royal Library, Florence, famous as a pioneer of library co-operation and well known to LA members for his attendance at their conferences.

WEAA and Dr Biagi had consulted each other in advance to decide who should take which theme. They agreed WEAA should cover the progress of knowledge in relation to the library, and Dr Biagi the past and future of the library. Dr Biagi seemed more nervous about travel than speaking on the rather nebulous themes of libraries, knowledge, and modern life. He was clearly happy at WEAA's kind response to his initial letter.

WEAA's paper, *The Library in relation to Literature and Life*, together with Dr Biagi's paper, was later published in the Congress transactions, the details being sent to him by the Librarian of Congress, Herbert Putnam whom WEAA had met in 1893. WEAA's paper was now entitled *The Library in relation to Knowledge and Life*, suggesting a different

focus and one more likely to appeal to the Congress. It changed again when it was printed to *The Library's Link with Science and Life*. His themes were the ideal library collection and the need for international co-operation, especially through printed catalogues. Unsurprisingly WEAA's paper was reprinted yet again in the MLC journal, now entitled *The Ideal Library : The Library in Relation to Knowledge and Life,* and then as a pamphlet.*[1000]*

Meeting Up
As on the 1893 trip WEAA made the most of his opportunities, meeting with African American friends, temperance workers, and vegetarians as well as librarians. Several AP correspondents referred to their encounters at St. Louis World Fair.

Again, he met with Scarborough. Scarborough was amazed to find Dr Axon, Mr. Broadbent and Mr. Harrison had walked three and a half miles from the city to Wilberforce to visit him, 'a true English love of walking.'[1001] Scarborough went to hear WEAA give his paper at St. Louis despite being so busy he could not take part in anything else.

William Harrison, and his son-in-law Albert Broadbent were VS comrades and treasured friends. It was thanks to WEAA that Broadbent

was on the trip: WEAA had organised an appeal to cover his expenses. This is only known from a solitary AP letter: Gwendolen Herbert, describing herself as a worker for vegetarians, sent a cheque from her home in Putney.[1002]

As well as being a delegate on international library business, WEAA, together with Harrison and Broadbent, formed the official British representation to the Vegetarian Conference, held on 27 and 28 September in conjunction with the Exposition. Another old VS comrade, the Rev. James Clark, minister of the Bible Christian Church Salford, was already in America. It must have been quite a Lancashire occasion as they were also reunited with the ex-Salford resident, The Rev. Henry Clubb, founder, and first President of the American Vegetarian Society.

Return Home

The only details of his voyage home are from a rather creepy correspondent, Walter Walsh of Dundee whom WEAA encountered onboard. Walsh's letter has coy references to 'my little womanie', the 'bookie of hymns' and the cheerful sentiment 'look forward to seeing you from time to time as we plod on to the grave.'[1003]

Hawke wrote to WEAA on 20 October, glad to hear he was back safely and that all had gone well. The VS had planned that their delegates should be back in time for the fifty-seventh annual meeting, the 17 October anniversary conference, and as WEAA, William Harrison and Albert Broadbent took up their usual places in the Memorial Hall, Albert Square, they must have felt they had never been away.

Librarians and Earls

Whether at home or abroad, WEAA could not resist the draw of unusual libraries and collections.

He was a welcome visitor to the magnificent Wigan Public Library with its outstanding collections of rare items, many given by Earl Crawford at nearby Haigh Hall. WEAA and the Chief Librarian, Henry Tennyson Folkard, were fellow members of the early LA committees but their friendship really grew through Folkard's gratitude for WEAA's *Guardian* articles in praise of both the library and of Folkard's catalogues. The twenty-eight AP letters from Folkard, running from 1884 to 1908, are a delight throughout.

The Wigan Public Library website once recorded that WEAA was one of the experts invited to recommend works for the initial collections. WEAA listed the best books relating to Lancashire and Cheshire.

Haigh Hall

Folkard introduced WEAA to A G E Phillips, the librarian of The Lindsay Library at nearby Haigh Hall, the seat of the Earls of Crawford. Both the twenty-fifth Earl of Crawford, Alexander William Lindsay (1812-1880) and his son James Ludovic Lindsay (1847-1913) were passionate bibliophiles and collectors, and their library was deemed the finest private

library in the country. James Ludovic Lindsay was also a dedicated astronomer and philatelist. As the twenty-sixth Earl of Crawford, he served a term as President of the LA, he was Chair of the Wigan Free Library Committee and a generous donor, enriching the collections with rare books and manuscripts. Folkard excitedly described to WEAA one such gift, over 1000 broadsheets of coloured caricatures relating to the Franco-German War & the Commune, 'You must come over and see them. Some very fine and some very indecent.'[1004]

WEAA and A G E Phillips respected each other as bibliophiles and there is an interesting correspondence in AP. Phillips writes in an extraordinarily beautiful hand and then takes to the typewriter. The association remained formal, but WEAA won the approval of both Phillips and the twenty-sixth Earl. He was entrusted in 1907 with the loan of the precious Bradshaigh Roll for an exhibition at the MLC albeit on rigorous conditions. Ernest was appointed bodyguard. With the keen encouragement of Phillips and the Earl, WEAA wrote several pieces about the Lindsay Library and its catalogues. His paper *Bibliothec a*

Lindesiana was presented in his absence by Sutton at the LA Conference in Perth in 1911.

In 1910, Phillips bravely lent WEAA a precious volume to photograph. This was the 'Characterie' table for his article on the Lindsay Library shorthand collection. Phillips was rightly nervous, laying down strict conditions, for he wrote, 'I once saw a Second folio taken out of its binding, and cut up into single sheets for photographic purposes, and I was horror struck at the sight.' [1005] WEAA's research into the *Characterie* was of keen interest to the Phonetic Society, 'One of the latest discoveries of Dr. Axon in the field of shorthand bibliography was, it will be remembered, in connection with the copy of Bright's Characterie of 1588 in the library of the late Earl of Crawford at Haigh Hall, Lancashire. His account of the "folding plate" in that work was one of the most interesting additions to our knowledge of Bright's system which has been made for many years.'[1006]

The two scholars shared an interest in ballads and there were around 2000 broadsheet ballads dating 1830-1860 in the Lindsay collection. Phillips was an exacting critic

judging by the ‘error of some importance’ that he identified in WEAA’s *Appreciation of the Bibliotheca Lindensia*. WEAA had given 1623 instead of 1622 for the presentation of *Flowres of Sion* to Sir David Lindsay.[1007]

The twenty-sixth Earl had financial troubles in the 1880s and was forced to part with some of the collection although he continued to collect French Revolution ephemera and manuscripts. Folkard wrote to WEAA in 1886 of the forthcoming sale of Lord Crawford’s books. He quoted from a note the great bookseller Bernard Quatrich had sent him, ‘The sale of Lord Crawford’s Library is a calamity to me ; I would have given a year of my life if the Haigh Hall Library could have been kept together.’ Lengthy descriptions in various newspapers show the collections to be a treasure beyond compare and on such a scale that it could only be tackled piecemeal. The richest part was the collection of over 6000 manuscripts, illuminated manuscripts and rare oriental printed books that were sensationally sold in 1901 to Mrs Rylands for over £150,000. The Earl’s heirs in 1913 auctioned off what remained, including the French manuscripts.[1008] His philatelic collection,

perhaps the greatest of the time, went to the BML and is now digitised as the BL's prized Crawford Library. It took until 1948 for the full disposal of the library through sale and gift.

Haigh Hall inspired WEAA to write a paper on the legend of Mab's Cross, joining the several authors, including Folkard, who had been drawn to the subject. Folkard listed as the authors 'Axon, Baines, Bridgeman, Folkard, Landreth, Roby, Scott,'[1009] the old account of the legend coming from the Bradshaigh's pedigree, owned by the Crawfords and presumably the self-same roll lent to WEAA. WEAA had discovered the first appearance in print of the legend, presenting his findings to the LCAS. The paper appeared in the Society's transactions as well as being printed as a pamphlet.[1010] It is reminiscent of his *The Wizard of Alderley Edge* in being a good example of WEAA's talent as a writer, his ability to tell an absorbing story whilst enriching it with scholarly knowledge. He set the local legend in the context of similar tales across time and cultures. WEAA's linguistic skills enabled him to explore much further than other commentators.

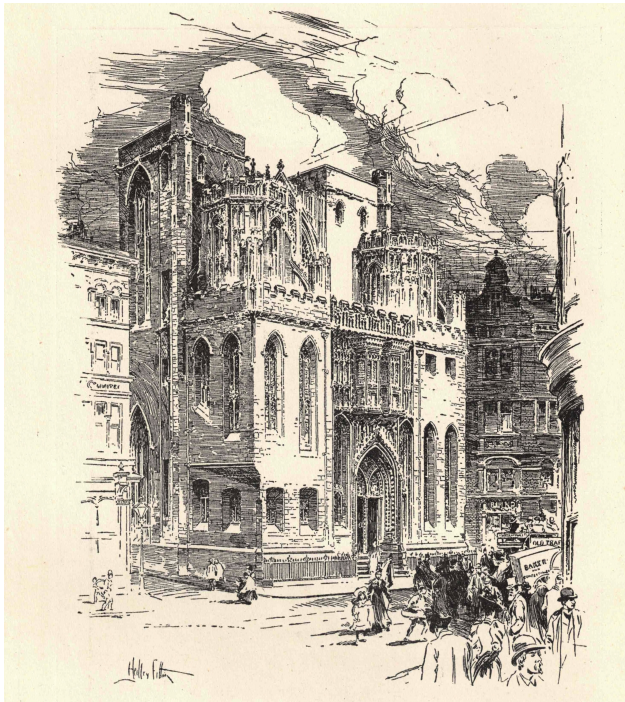
His essay on the complex history of the house of Lindsay, *The Lindsays in Lancashire*,[1011] is still referred to by historians, most recently in a paper by A P Kup.[1012]WEAA ended his essay with praise of 'the noble library at Haigh Hall, where the late Earl gathered together the most remarkable private collection in the county, if not indeed in the kingdom.'

John Rylands Library

The most extraordinary enterprise in Manchester in this period was the building of the glorious John Rylands Library.

The enigmatic Mrs Rylands was firmly in control of her wondrous Gothic creation, the memorial to her husband, overseeing the details, and acquiring rare collections on a breath-taking scale. She needed no committee approval for the fortune she used was all her own. Librarians from all over the world were amongst the thousand or more guests at the opening reception and dedication on 6 October 1899 but otherwise they had no fingers in the pie.

There was a huge demand for reader tickets. WEAA together with several of his friends were privileged to be listed as early readers. He was described in the commemorative 1949 *Guardian* article as a 'Lancashire Antiquary.'[1013]



John Rylands Library: from *Views and Memoranda of Public Libraries* by Alfred Cotgreave, 1901

Dr Henry Guppy joined John Rylands in 1890, as joint then sole Chief Librarian. He knew WEAA through the LA and the Bibliographic Society. In 1899, as editor of the new *Library Association Record,* he was eager to persuade WEAA to contribute and always appreciative of his articles, 'Your interest in the affairs of the Association and better still in the library movement generally is so well known that I have no hesitation in making the appeal.'[1014]

Unlike some editors, he was keen to publish WEAA's bibliographical pieces.

The handful of letters from Guppy to WEAA, dating from 1899 to 1912, were predominantly focused on bibliographic matters with chatty news thrown in. One letter gives an interesting glimpse of 'friend Credland' and his overlong paper. Guppy suggests that WEAA might be wise to be anonymous in his review of Credland's book in case he might 'slate' Credland. As it transpires the review appeared with WEAA's name, and Guppy was relieved that it was 'precisely what I was wishing for – a well merited appreciation.'[1015] Guppy may have had a daughter at school with Dorothy as he fondly mentioned her, as well as making complimentary references to Ernest. Guppy played an active role in the education of library assistants, another bond with WEAA.

WEAA's articles on John Rylands usually triggered admiring comment. Hawke particularly liked his article on Guppy's exhibition of English Bibles.[1016] WEAA included a few lines about the printer Hans Lüft, significant to him because of the

connection to Setta's family. The treasures of John Rylands inspired him anew, especially 'the great collection of early printed literature.' In his article, *On Wyknken de Worde's Tract on 'Wednesdayes Faste'*, WEAA paid tribute to 'the friendly goodwill of the librarian, Mr. Henry Guppy, M.A.'[1017]

The scale of Mrs Ryland's and Dr Guppy's achievements sparked jealousy in London. WEAA was on the gossip circuit, receiving this stunning letter from Sir William Henry Bailey who had apparently been engaged in LA political battles, 'I am glad I succeeded in smashing up the attacks on the Executive Committee and especially one or two jealous attacks on Guppy. The London librarian is a great study to me. Several of them are cultured gentlemen and more or less suffering from a sense of suffocation and blight. You do not know how much time I have devoted when I have been in London to keep down all ruffianism.'[1018] This inside view is extraordinary. Yet he knew he could trust WEAA as they had known each other for years. He also knew that WEAA would appreciate all the nuances of this gossipy history. Bailey further confided that 'my only

fear is that they may succeed in wrecking the Association. It is a great loss that Pacy was driven away.'

The Salford born William Henry Bailey was an engineer, founder of the Albion Ironworks, an inventor, promoter of the Manchester Ship Canal, and member of several of the same societies as WEAA, including the Field Naturalists, as well as being President of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. He was a man who could get things done. In 1887 he and WEAA investigated the mysterious Woden's Cave that had been discovered in Salford; Bailey easily arranged for 'a few hundred tons of rubbish' to be cleared from the site.[1019] He was much loved for his humour, lack of pomposity and for what was described as 'the kind of gleeful zest' with which he launched into public service.[1020] In 1906 he added being President of the LA to his crowded career. Another perfect example of a Manchester Man. It is not surprising he and WEAA were good friends.

Thomas Greenwood (1851-1908)

Born near Stockport in 1851, Thomas Greenwood experienced poverty and hardship as a child. His widowed mother tried to ensure

he had some sort of education, but he was largely self-educated. He haunted Manchester Free Library as a young man, encountering WEAA there. He was a library assistant at Sheffield for two years, and despite this limited experience became renowned as a major advocate of free libraries, being dubbed 'The Apostle of the Library Movement.'[1021] It was Greenwood who ensured that the tragic Edward Edwards, pioneer of free libraries, should not be forgotten.

The Edward Edwards Monument: Niton, Isle of Wight

Edward Edwards, difficult and isolated as he

was, was a legendary figure. Both WEAA and Sutton respected Edwards as the pioneering first Chief Librarian at Manchester. WEAA was determined to engage with the great man. There are six AP letters from Edwards to WEAA, most written in 1870, all dealing with library matters. Fairly curt in style, Edwards avoided anything personal, declining to provide a reference for WEAA's application for the Leeds post, 'it is not in my power to have the pleasure of complying.'[1022] Sutton grew to admire Edwards when, as a young library assistant, he was tasked with sorting out the archive of his correspondence as Chief Librarian, 'I well remember being astonished at its copiousness and diversity.'[1023]

Greenwood set up his own publishing company and brought out the first major biography of Edwards in 1902. He also initiated and paid for the installation of a red granite monument over Edwards' unmarked grave in the Niton churchyard on the Isle of Wight. Around fifteen librarians attended the unveiling ceremony on 2 February 1902, with Axon presiding at Greenwood's insistence. The shy and unobtrusive Greenwood wanted simplicity, saying 'We young men of the

Municipal Library World are too sensible to begin emptying butter-pots over each other.' It was an emotional occasion, a place of pilgrimage where histories met. Greenwood generously included the names of the four men who had shared his determination to make this happen on the inscription base, 'Cinis non finis. In memory of Edward Edwards. Born in London, December 14, 1812. Died at Niton, February 7, 1886. Man of letters and founder (with William Ewart and Joseph Brotherton) of municipal public libraries. This monument has been placed over his grave in recognition of his work on behalf of public libraries by Thomas Greenwood. Inaugurated on February 7, 1902, by Richard Garnett, Charles W. Sutton, William E. A. Axon, John J. Ogle.' WEAA described the occasion in the *Library Collector*.[1024]

The Thomas Greenwood Library for Librarians

It would appear from the AP correspondence that WEAA contacted Greenwood initially in 1896, praising him for popularising the public library movement. Greenwood in return was pleased that WEAA had agreed to contribute a chapter on the early history of the movement in Greenwood's *Library Year Book*, 1897. This

is one of WEAA's most impressive and expert overviews. The friendship developed with Greenwood variously confiding about his shyness as 'a simple Lancashire Lad,'[1025] supporting WEAA's scheme for a universal bibliography, and taking interest in Ernest's career, 'Young Ernest has the soul of a true bibliographer.'[1026] It was inevitable that Greenwood would look for WEAA's assistance in another major enterprise.

Greenwood met with some hostility from the profession, 'The initial reaction to Greenwood's activities by the LA was unfavourable because he was considered as amateur.'[1027] Even years later his work *Free Public Libraries* was rather gratuitously sneered at 'by no means always accurate' in a reference entry.[1028] In this climate, WEAA's admiration would have been cheering. His support helped towards acceptance and in 1901 Greenwood was elected as an Honorary Member of the LA. Especially keen on helping the assistants, he decided in 1904 to give his huge personal collection of bibliographic and library related material to Manchester for the use of such students together with his collection of Edward Edwards' books, papers,

and manuscripts. The Thomas Greenwood Library for Librarians is still at MCL, housed in its magnificent art nouveau style bookcases, but not accessible to the public. Greenwood took deep interest in the project and suggested that WEAA was 'the man to help in cataloguing the collection.'[1029]

WEAA certainly was involved as was Sutton's son Oliver, an enthusiastic disciple, later tragically lost at Péronne in WW1. Cataloguing would have been an enormous task for the collection covered over 10,000 items, not only books but specimens of manuscript on papyrus, vellum and paper, bindings of horn, ivory, and early chained Dutch books. Charles Sutton as Chief Librarian was to keep an eye on his old friend which must have amused them both, 'Charles Sutton aided him [Greenwood] in the areas of fine printing, binding and rare books and supervised the cataloguing which was done by W.E. Axon.'[1030] How much WEAA covered is unknown. But he publicised the collection, giving a talk at the twenty-ninth LA conference in Bradford in 1906. In his final AP letter to WEAA in 1907 Greenwood praised WEAA's book *Cobden as Citizen* and ended

with ‘I am glad to learn that the cataloguing of the books is making good progress.’ Greenwood died a year later, leaving an endowment for the upkeep of the collection. He received a splendid obituary from WEAA in the *Library Association Record.* WEAA always paid grateful tribute to Greenwood’s influence on the public library movement although some professionals remained resentful of an amateur’s achievements.

The Rescue of Joseph Radford

Joseph Radford was the librarian in charge of Campfield Lending Library when WEAA and Sutton were both boy assistants. As related, he had interviewed WEAA and recommended his appointment. Radford was highly regarded by Crestadoro. When he moved to London as librarian at Westminster Free Library Radford stayed in touch, warning Crestadoro of southern librarians’ machinations to take control of library politics. His promising career ended in disaster when he was dismissed for embezzlement of library funds in 1881. Both Radford and a subsequent librarian at Westminster who was also charged with embezzlement were likely to have been framed.

By 1901 Radford had returned to Manchester, working as a warehouse porter and the family were struggling to survive. In 1908 he became unemployed and desperate. He wrote to WEAA at the *Guardian* office, not having his private address, appealing for any type of copying or clerical work, ‘In fact, anything I could do.’[1031] WEAA pencilled a note on the

letter, a reminder to himself to keep the address in case he heard of anything. Meanwhile he promptly commissioned Radford to copy an MS. Radford wrote to thank him and to ask him to let him know of any opportunities that might come up. Charles Sutton must have stepped in for the 1911 census records Radford working as 'Cataloguer Public Library' at the age of seventy.

It is good to know that the boy assistants, now distinguished men, did not abandon their old boss.

Office Librarian

Given his prominence in the library profession, his leading role across a variety of fronts, it is easy to overlook the mundane post WEAA held as the *Guardian* office librarian. WEAA seems to have rather overlooked it too as there is no evidence that he initiated new systems, developed the collections, or transformed the library a central resource. Yet he had all the experience to do so if he had cared. He had sorted out filing and documentation for societies like the MSS and the MLC, he had classified and catalogued private collections, including his own, and he was an exponent of the value of ephemeral literature. The only conclusion is that he much

preferred his activities as reviewer and editor for the *Guardian*.

C P Scott was a kind and sympathetic employer, but he had high standards and expectations. Employees who did not deliver were usually let go. He valued WEAA as a journalist, a scholar, and a reformer, tolerating his neglect of the office library.

In 1892 Scott appointed G. Binney Dibblee, a recent recruit, as office manager. A Fellow of All Souls Oxford, an economist, Dibblee, like other office managers before him at the *Guardian*, was not content to manage but wanted involvement in editorial policy. However, his politics were at odds with the liberal *Guardian* and the Boer War brought a crisis. Circulation declined through the *Guardian*'s opposition to the Boer War and Dibblee eventually resigned. Having made the gesture, he would not then set a definite date for departure and manipulated his way into power.

Dibblee comes across as a clever, well organised man, sharp on improving printing and distribution but weaker on the projects he tried to push through. The main problem seems to have been his personality, 'something cold and distant in my relations with him' as C P Scott's partner, John Taylor described. Yet

Dibblee somehow managed to twist Taylor into his ally, intensifying the divisions between the partners. When the *Guardian* fell into trouble over Taylor's will there was the awful prospect at one stage that C P Scott would depart, leaving Dibblee in overall control. Many of the loyal staff decided they would resign as they 'felt it would be an intolerable dishonour to serve under Dibblee.'[1032] The *Guardian* obituary for Dibblee in 1952 was extremely curt.

The Complaint

Dibblee was a super-efficient office and business manager, meticulous in his operations and producing 'admirable summaries of each year's working.'[1033] He depended on accessible and accurate information. From his perspective WEAA was a disaster. He poured out his annoyance in a long letter to C P Scott, dated 11 November 1895.

> 'I have spoken to Couper about Callender & he can think of nothing for him except to employ him temporarily to do the work which Axon has neglected. Axon has no objection to this although no doubt he would not like the way I express the

> situation. But I must say frankly I am quite disgusted with Axon's casual attitude to his duties as librarian, for which he does not seem to feel even a responsibility. I have offered to give Callender 25/- a week temporarily to put the books straight under Axon's direction but I should like when you return to open the whole question. Axon has under his charge besides his small closet two extensive libraries & a file room of which I suppose the rental wd amount to over £150 a year & not one of them is in a decent state of order. The increase of space recently given to him seems to enable him to leave a larger quantity of books unsorted than formerly. Last year his small room had to be cleared of litter pretty frequently to prevent an absolute block. However, I will not say more until I can talk it over with you.'[1034]

There are no other letters on this topic and as WEAA continued in post it must be concluded that C P Scott shrugged off Dibblee's complaint. Scott knew that WEAA was totally reliable for producing swift responses on all sorts of topics, the very reason he became increasingly involved on the editorial side.

WEAA seems to have been uninterested in the office librarian role and Dibblee's anger is understandable. But was it all as bad as he described? It is perfectly possible to produce meticulous documents,

catalogue records, indexes, statistics, to process bibliographic items through their library adventures whilst living in the middle of apparent chaos. There is support for this unorthodox view of the office librarian in a recent study:

> ‘A seemingly messy office can be as well organised in which no scrap of paper is out of place. Although the opinions of managers and business consultants may differ, you’d be hard-pressed to find a strong correlation between clutter and inefficiency. Piles of papers may give you quicker access to information than do nicely labelled files that have been hidden away in cabinets.’[1035]

Antiquarians can be equally paradoxical with pedantic minds but little concern with tidy desks. Scott’s antiquary Jonathan Oldbuck lived amongst such litter in his study:

> ‘One end was entirely occupied by book-shelves, greatly too limited for the number of volumes placed upon them, which were, therefore, drawn up in ranks of two or three files deep, while numberless others littered the floor and the tables, amid a chaos of maps, engravings, scraps of parchment, bundles of papers, pieces of old armour, swords, dirks, helmets, and Highland targets.’[1036]

In Mr Green’s scrapbook there is a print of a dishevelled scholar

working at his desk in the middle of such a littered den. It must have made both friends smile.

Dibblee's direct threat to WEAA did not materialise in his dismissal. Ten years later, however, it is feasible that this old history, as well as more recent factors, wrought catastrophe for WEAA.

CHAPTER 29

C P SCOTT'S WILD IDEA

Shock

1905 started well for WEAA. Early in the year he liaised with the British Archaeological Association over the Angel Stone in Manchester Cathedral and was invited to write the key paper on this sensational find.[1037] He presented a paper to LCAS on the fragment of the Manchester Roman altar to Fortuna Conservatrix, heard that RSL would pay for a BML manuscript transcript he needed for his March paper on Romeo, investigated the eighteenth-century secret police of France and Russia for his friend, the Wigan librarian H J Folkard, and responded to several authors who wanted reviews in the *Guardian.* He was invited as a contributor to the dinner at the Mosley Hotel to celebrate 'the 'Odds & Ends manuscript magazine which has been issued for 50 years under the continuous editorship of George Milner.'[1038] WEAA may have found time to accept E Romaine Callender's pressing invitation to the Gaiety where his new play was being produced. On 7 February he

received the gorgeously coloured membership card for the Free Trade League.

As gardeners know, January is the time for planning. WEAA was contemplating the offer of ‘narcissus or `Osmunda Regalis Ferns’ from his temperance friend, Alfred E Eccles, in Chorley: Eccles wrote with what proved to be uncanny prescience, ‘You will find “Gardening” a nice “alternative” to being at a “Sitdown” Desk.’[1039]

On Wednesday 1 March WEAA was on the platform of the twenty-first annual meeting of the Manchester Society for the Protection of Animals from Vivisection, held at the Friends Institute, Mount Street. Then over to the Moss Side Public Library for a red- letter evening event, John Cassidy’s presentation of his plaster bust of Thomas De Quincey. WEAA launched the unveiling with an address on De Quincey’s life and literary works. Cassidy’s gift was a prestigious addition to the De Quincey collection, a triumph for WEAA and Mr Green. On the Saturday of the same week, WEAA as President of the International Brotherhood welcomed members and guests to a crowded reception at the Whitworth Art Gallery. This annual conversazione was enhanced by the presence of American peace delegates, one of whom, Mrs W P Byles, gave an address.

Sunday Post Office collection and delivery operated in the provinces until WW1. The efforts of the Sabbatarians deprived London of the service. WEAA received a letter from C P Scott, dated 5 March, either on the Sunday or early on Monday 6 March.

He was devastated by the contents and did not attend the MLC on the Monday evening as planned. Instead, President George Milner read out WEAA’s paper which as the *Guardian*

reported ‘contained a bibliographic description of one of the “cradle books” of the press - *Pithsanus: Liber de oculo morali*, printed in Augsburg about 1472 by Anthony Sorg.’[1040] It would have been an enjoyable event for WEAA, delving into the book’s bibliographical conundrums, the debatable attributions to John Pecham (Pithsanus), and mediaeval notions of optics. Only a crisis would have made him miss it. The paper was published in the *Manchester Quarterly* and then as a pamphlet.[1041] It is a tour de force of WEAA’s talents, a dazzling display of bibliographic knowledge, with curious diversions into the folklore of the white bird that appears before death. Leaping from the *Liber de Oculo Morali* to *Westward Ho!* Is quite a feat: as usual WEAA’s enlivened the wealth of scholarly information with entertaining stories. His pride in this Moss Side Library’s treasure is palpable.

It was indeed a crisis that kept him from this event. WEAA did not happily retire from the *Guardian*, as is the received story, but was rather brutally ‘let go.’ C P Scott’s letter has not survived but WEAA’s reply has. It was a shock to come across this and to discover the

real circumstances.

WEAA's Reply

It took WEAA longer than usual to reply. His response to C P Scott is dated 9 March 1905. [1042] The pain, panic and despair expressed in the letter will be familiar to anyone who has suddenly been made redundant after years with an organisation that has become like family. For once, WEAA cannot prevent his emotional response from spilling out:

> 'Dear Mr. Scott
>
> I was very sorry to receive your letter of the 5th. The shock was all the greater that I had not become conscious of diminished usefulness or failing powers. But of that you are the only judge, and as the parting had to be made I am grateful for the kindly consideration with which it is to be affected.
>
> It is not without emotion that I face the breaking of a tie that has lasted for more than half a lifetime and in my sixtieth year set about organising a new life. When I was a young man I was more than once rejected by insurance companies and it was not until I was 38 that I was able to obtain a policy on any conditions. This has meant high premiums and I am now spending £100 a year, in such payments which, under the circumstances, seemed to be the only practicable form providing something for those I may leave behind me.
>
> I mention this in order to emphasise my expression of hope that although I cease to be a member of the staff you may be willing to give me work as an occasional contributor of special

articles and reviews. I am probably as well acquainted with the highways & byways of Manchester history as anyone, and apart from general English history and bibliography I have read a good deal of German, French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese on various subjects.
I understand then that I cease to be a member of the staff in June, and that you will allow me my salary to the end of the year and a retiring allowance of £150 for five years longer. I gratefully accept the offer with many thanks,
Yours faithfully

William E. A. Axon'

As a member of numerous societies and campaigns, WEAA's activities, were regularly covered in the newspapers, much doubtless contributed from his own reports. March continued to be a busy month, but WEAA must have struggled to get through his usual commitments after the body blow from his beloved *Guardian*.

Supporting a family

WEAA's worry about continuing his insurance payments should not be underestimated. Life insurance was critical for family survival in WEAA's time. If the breadwinner died without making provision, the surviving family were faced with financial disaster, the abyss into which the Victorian middle class could easily fall. Over the years WEAA had regularly appealed for funds on behalf of struggling families of deceased friends or colleagues. In

1933 Ernest was concerned for the widowed Mrs Charles Rowley as her husband had a ‘bad spec’ with the insurance.[1043]

The frail WEAA had struggled to find a company to accept him and ascribed his eventual success to his vegetarian diet. A VS member wrote, ‘Always of spare frame, he was thought to be preparing himself for an early grave, and some 30 or 40 years ago, when desirous of insuring his life, his proposal was declined by a well-known office. It marked the change in public opinion when, more than a score of years later, in 1896, he again applied to the same office, and was accepted “as a first-class life”.’[1044]

It is understandable that WEAA’s first thought on his dismissal was for the insurance payments. At this stage Dorothy was only eleven. His unremitting hard work had taken its toll. In 1905 one friend was struck by the mixture of tiredness and cheerfulness, ‘Those kind brown eyes of his, “weary with the watching of the years,” sparkled with friendliness to all men…’[1045]

Arthur Reade who appears several times in AP was, amongst other roles an insurance agent

for the Scottish Temperance Life Assurance Company. He wrote to WEAA in 1886, trying to persuade him to consider an additional policy that would be payable on reaching sixty or on death. Reade refers to WEAA's existing policy, a premium of £25-12-1 per quarter, for a payment of £500 on death.[1046]

Crisis at the *Guardian*

As usual WEAA had been busy over the months before his dismissal. The trip to St. Louis had made demands on him as an official delegate for both the international library community and for the VS. Preparation and reporting had to be exactly right. He also had the task of representing the RSL as well as carrying out several requests from individuals.

On the literary front WEAA had been occupied with a great deal of business over two proposed books, one on Luigi Cornaro with Dr Kellogg and one on Richard Cobden with the publisher Fisher Unwin. Moss Side Library and the lead up to the presentation of the De Quincey bust had taken time. Throughout 1904 WEAA had produced poems, translations, and reviews, as well as commissioning transcriptions for his research. He did not neglect social reform, receiving thanks from the Lord Mayor for his influential publication on cheap dinners for school children. He mourned the death of his old friend Leo Grindon in November.

Yet WEAA must have been aware of the turmoil at the *Guardian* even if he had not realised it might affect him.

Inhouse politics disturbed the usual comradery, the pleasant atmosphere that *Guardian* staff reminisced about. Since 1895 C

P Scott's focus had been on his political career as Liberal MP for Leigh and he was distracted too by his beloved wife's illness, frequently taking her abroad for recuperation. There was conflict between John Scott, C P Scott's son who had joined the Manchester staff in 1902, and Dibblee who had moved to London in 1903 and still hung on at the *Guardian* through manipulating the partner, Taylor. Resentful of the Scott family, despising Scott's liberal principles, Dibblee's overbearing behaviour made John's life a misery. Dibblee is a rather Uriah Heep figure, undermining colleagues with sly criticisms. Fred Faraday, WEAA's friend from Crichton Club days, was another victim with Dibblee complaining to Scott of his 'half-digested schemes.' Once in power in London Dibblee addressed Mr Scott as 'Dear Scott' in correspondence. Like Uriah Heep, he acted as though he had become an equal.

There were financial problems too. In 1905 the *Guardian* was in trouble. The brief recovery at the end of the Boer War was followed by three years of low profit. The *Guardian* needed funds to fight against a new wave of competitors, the most serious being

the *Manchester Courier*, bought by Harmsworth in 1904.

The timing of WEAA's dismissal is telling. This was the month Taylor declared his intention of making Dibblee a partner, and perhaps he exerted additional pressure on John Scott to get rid of someone who had been an irritant to Dibblee. The financial situation might have meant a round of staff cuts too.

But it may have been C P Scott alone who decided that WEAA was no longer a fit with the *Guardian*. After all it was C P Scott who sent the dismissal letter to WEAA and who decided on the five-year allowance. It might have been the case of a returning brush sweeping clean. During 1905 Scott re-affirmed his position at the *Guardian* and did not stand for re-election as MP for Leigh in 1906. The *Guardian* journalist, William Haslam Mills, wrote, 'In 1905 he left Parliament, made Manchester his centre again, and, though he had never relaxed his hold on the Guardian, entered with a definite renewal of the spirit upon his editorship. He came home.'[1047]

WEAA at least escaped the worst turmoil ever seen at the *Guardian*. Taylor died in October 1905, leaving total chaos behind him with an ill-conceived, power-sharing will that needed legal and financial intervention to unscramble.

The complications of the will nearly destroyed the *Guardian* and Dibblee played a part in this, 'In *Guardian* tradition, and in family memory, Dibblee was the manager who interfered, the villain of the War of the Taylor Succession.'[1048] Nothing was resolved until late 1906 when C P Scott managed to get the funds together to buy out Taylor's nephews. Scott remained as editor until 1929, still cycling to the office until his death in 1932. Towering figure though he was, he had his critics amongst the staff. He could be stingy, authoritarian, and cold. Howard Spring felt 'For all the human appreciation there was, one might have been working for a marble statue.'[1049]

The allowance made to WEAA was generous, representing almost twice the average wage, but the sting was its limit of five years. Even so WEAA was grateful to Scott and showed sadness rather than resentment at his dismissal.

Most of Scott's letters to WEAA are short business memos as might be expected but there are also warm ones appreciative of WEAA's books and achievements. The correspondence continued after 1905. WEAA wrote occasionally for the *Guardian* as well as trying to involve Scott in some other enterprises. Both commiserated with each

other when they were hit by family tragedies.

The dismissal puzzled many.

Hawke's Question

Edward G Hawke of Wadham College had been an art critic and reviewer on the *Guardian*, one of the team of Oxbridge men. Judging by his numerous newsy letters in AP, he and WEAA were good friends, an association that extended to their families. Hawke left the *Guardian* in 1903, moving to the *Daily Chronicle* and afterwards to the *Tribune* in London, then to the *Glasgow Herald*. He became assistant editor at *The Spectator* and was still writing in the late 1930s. Between posts, desperate for a permanent contract, Hawke appealed to WEAA to get him *Guardian* work, reviews, or articles as well as to put in a word for him on the St. Louis trip.

WEAA only confided the truth to a few trusted friends. It is illuminating to see those allowed to glimpse his distress, amongst them the Misses Gaskell, Hawke, and J S R Phillips. He hid his upset from others, letting them believe he had chosen to retire.

Hawke's reaction was swift, writing on 13 March, 'I am indeed disturbed to have your news. There is nothing but change in this world, but I did hope that you would be staying at the "M.G." for many a long year to

come. Of course I am glad that the proprietors are giving you a pension, but you have more than earned it – as they will realise when you are gone. It is the part of your going anyway that makes me sad. And it is rather sudden, too. I wonder what wild idea C. P. S. has got in his head.'[1050]

Others asked this too. WEAA was a useful local man, well able to produce pieces on literary and historical associations of the County Palatine, a reliable source for reports on a range of societies, an expert on libraries and an able linguist. He was still at heart a scholar and antiquarian, as ever addicted to esoteric debates in *N&Q*, but he was one of the few invited to contribute to the dedicatedly modern English *Historical Review*. Being a *Guardian* journalist kept him at the cutting edge.

He was a skilled and assiduous reviewer, and it seems strange that C P Scott who was intent on expanding the coverage of fiction through an expansion of outside reviewers as well as the inhouse team should have discarded him. But then C P Scott liked fresh blood and was proud of his elite team of Oxbridge men, several of whom became famous in the annals of journalism, literature, or academia. His outside reviewers too included distinguished writers, critics, and experts.

As the century moved on WEAA must have

looked like a relic of the past with his long scholarly beard and blue Invergarry overcoat, a sharp contrast to the sporty, cleanshaven Oxbridge men. His vegetarian and temperance principles added to the faint eccentricity. It is unlikely that he improved the organisation of the newspaper office whilst *Guardian* stars like the leader-writer and historian, William Thomas Arnold, scion of Rugby and Oxford, was renowned for his system of pigeon-holes, 'the scene of an incessant alighting of doves from the most remote climates of the foreign reviews, from the cycling papers, from the medical, the ironmongery, and the grocery papers, and indeed from everywhere and anywhere where "the facts" about any subject under the sun could be collected-virginal and unimpassioned.'[1051] Surely this is what the office librarian should have been doing? There is a passing reference in one of Edward G Hawke's letters to 'I hope Murray still relieves you of the tiresome detail work'[1052] which suggests at the very least WEAA cherry-picked his duties.

Hawke had previously noticed WEAA's rediscovery of his favourite, usually obscure, topics; he wrote on 12 January 1905, 'I am

glad to see that you are writing more now on your own interesting subjects.'[1053] He had not spotted the danger of this: it may well have been another factor in influencing C P Scott's decision.

All the factors lead to the conclusion that C P Scott was facing a troubled time for the *Guardian*, was encountering antagonism from Taylor and Dibblee, and that he needed to strengthen the financial position to win battles with new competitors. WEAA was expendable; C P Scott probably convinced himself WEAA would welcome retirement.

C P Scott continued in the usual brisk fashion with WEAA until his official retirement at the end of June. Shortly after the dismissal letter he sent him a quick query about portraits of Charlotte Brontë. WEAA's expert reply with a further suggestion on a fresh approach for the fiftieth anniversary of her death has been kept as a draft in AP. [1054] It does seem short-sighted that WEAA was let go.

The joint letter from staff sent to WEAA on the day of his retirement, 30 June 1905, was warmly informal. His colleagues, 'some of us for a very long time' thanked him 'most

heartily for your unfailing kindness and helpfulness' and presented him with a little gift 'as a token of our very sincere respect and regard, and of the regret we all feel at the loss of so good and loyal a friend and colleague from the corridor.'[1055]WEAA's kindness was legendary. Several of WEAA's old colleagues, some of whom became prominent in various professions, did not forget what they owed him when later reminiscing in memoirs or letters about their early days at the *Guardian*. Colleagues who could not attend the leaving ceremony sent their good wishes. The letter was signed by the top people at the *Guardian,* including Albert Monkhouse, C E Montague, C P Scott, and his much-loved son Lawrence.

'More a Bookman than a Journalist'

F E Hamer, an old Guardian colleague, was fond of WEAA, kept in touch in later years, and left a very honest opinion of him as a newspaperman. In his tribute published in the *British Weekly* after WEAA died, Hamer expanded on how WEAA found it hard to adapt to the rapid changes of the newspaper industry:

> 'It was the more difficult in his case because, in spite of the long period he

> spent in journalism, Axon was always more a bookman than a journalist. The mere topic of the moment, however exciting, did not greatly move him. His deeper interests were in the serener world of books, and his mind turned most naturally to literary and historical research. So far as literature is included in journalism he was a journalist but that was about all. His work was at its finest between the covers of a book. Nothing, I fancy, would have pleased him more than to be considered a scholar.' [1056]

This view from one who knew him well makes sense of WEAA's dismissal at this critical time for the *Guardian*. WEAA generally was regarded as a scholar, a man of letters, but there were those who did not forget his pioneering journalism. An anonymous colleague acclaimed him as a scholar but also remembered the forceful articles he wrote on 'negro lynching' in the *Guardian*.[1057]

Hopeless to Expect

Six years later, looking back at this period, WEAA wrote to C P Scott, 'It was hopeless for me to expect at the age of 60, and it is still more hopeless at 65, a new engagement, and I

must content myself with miscellaneous literary work.'[1058]

WEAA now sought to extend his money earning capacity. Admirably he wasted no time in arguing his case at the *Guardian* but set about supplementing his allowance. As soon as he had expressed his feelings to C P Scott about his dismissal, WEAA sounded him out on the prospect of *Guardian* commissions. In the days that followed, WEAA scoured his contact networks for freelance prospects.

Several of WEAA's draft letters in AP make fascinating reading not just for the content but for the revelation that the calm, peaceful WEAA could, like anyone else, be annoyed when treated unjustly, especially under stress.

In 1908 he approached Walter Butterworth, Chair of the Art Gallery Committee with a proposal for a lecture on Lord Leighton's Andromache painting. Butterworth sought to know whether WEAA would give the lecture freely 'out of citizenship' or for a fee. If the latter Butterworth suggested there were several procedures to go through. Clearly, he expected WEAA not to charge. WEAA crossed out the last paragraph of his draft reply. However, it is still legible and gives a rare glimpse of WEAA's bitterness at the financial

pressures of his enforced retirement, 'I think I have given as freely of money & time in proportion to my means, as most men for the good of Manchester, though my efforts may have been ill-directed. They have brought me little more than the consciousness of honest effort. I hope you may be more successful in result and recognition.' WEAA also mentioned an 'absurd story' in the *City News* that has upset him. More happily he wrote of the pleasure the painting gave Setta and himself, 'If my desire to lecture on Andromache ever "swelled like the Solway" it has "ebbed like its tide," and I will now ask you to let me withdraw the suggestion I made to you. (The picture has always been a great favourite with my wife and I, and we have stood before it in admiration hundreds of times in our frequent visits to the Gallery.)' [1059]

Opportunities and Disappointments

Of course, WEAA was always busy on the publishing front, submitting scholarly papers, reviews, and ideas for his pet projects. However, there is a discernible flurry of activity in the AP correspondence following notice of dismissal. Judging by the increase in correspondence, WEAA was frantically

activating his networks for new commissions. Amongst others he contacted J S R Phillips, editor of the *Yorkshire Post*, George Milner, president of the MLC, Hugh Christopher of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Thomas Greenwood, W L Bamford of the *Co-operative News*, H T Crofton, James Hogg (once De Quincey's publisher), Fisher Unwin, Alfred Pollard, editor of *The Library*, Arthur Reade of *Business,* and Professor Mayor. WEAA had raised funds for Arthur Reade when he suffered an accident in 1888, and Reade responded now with an invitation to his office in Wilmslow.

Few knew the true story behind these requests for work. Even long-standing friends like George Milner were kept in the dark for he wrote to congratulate him, saying that WEAA's retirement 'gives me great pleasure.'[1060] Clearly WEAA did not want the MLC to know of his humiliation. Most correspondents were under the impression that all was well.

Some perhaps read between the lines. A fellow member of the Chetham Society and Moss Side District Clerk, H T Crofton, had sounded him out to help with the transcription of the Manchester Registers. He was also intent on

badgering ‘millionaire Mancunians’ as subscribers. WEAA must have outlined the change of circumstances in his reply. Crofton then wrote, ‘You are not likely to be an idler. It is not in you but I am sure you will miss for some time the sweet control of the reins of daily work.’[1061] WEAA was unlikely now to commit to unpaid projects.

Some of the responses to his appeals were vague or even discouraging, especially as most were in the dark about the real situation. Greenwood assumed WEAA’s retirement was a happy business, ‘May your days of well-earned rest be full of joy.’ He promised to put work in his way but there was ‘little demand for literature upon libraries.’[1062] Pollard who seemed to delight in rejecting WEAA’s work, continued to disparage his suggestions for *The Library*. In these few weeks WEAA proposed editing *Fuller’s Worthies*, writing a history of Manchester for schools, as well as pursuing ongoing projects such as the Cobden book with Fisher Unwin, and a contribution to a new illustrated edition of *Enchirdion* with W Robinson. WEAA sent photographs but the edition apparently never appeared. WEAA’s contribution was in the earlier 1894 *Enchirdion*

edition, edited by Alexander Ireland.[1063] The piece was an extract from his article on Free Public Libraries, originally published in *Meliora* in October 1867.

WEAA was confident in entrusting the Misses Gaskell with the full story. They were appalled. Meta wrote from Switzerland, 'I dare not on a card put all that we feel of sympathy (and more) for you on your "retirement" How we shall miss your writings in the columns of the Manr Guardian!'[1064] But their sympathy could not help with WEAA's financial dilemma.

The letter from Matilde Hompes, family friend and an active fellow member of the VS, must have jolted WEAA out of any self-pity. She had heard of the retirement and pension and hoped that it 'will provide at least one square meal per day. Can you persuade any kind soul to provide me with something of that sort?'[1065]

Practical Help

In 1900 William Andrews the Hull publisher had desperately needed help when his firm hit financial disaster. A printed appeal to prevent his family home being sold went out to the

many scholars, antiquarians, and *N&Q* aficionados who over the years had contributed to his colourful publications. WEAA had been associated with him at least as far back as 1884 and of course responded to the appeal. Later Andrews wrote to him, thanking him for his kindness and breaking the glorious news that he was snatched from ruin by being appointed as librarian of the Hull Literary and Philosophical Society. Even then Andrews could not keep away from the publishing world, writing about authors and books in 'a number of newspapers.' It looks as if WEAA confided in him and although now much more limited in his enterprises Andrews tried to help WEAA, promoting both his works and Setta's Southport enterprise, more of which in the next chapter.

WEAA was long associated with the Co-operative Society as well as being a friend of their eminent supporter, George Holyoake. The *Co-operative News* formed another community of print and WEAA was in at the start. When I visited Holyoake House, the archivist told me WEAA may even have written pieces in the various forerunners to the *Co-operative News*. It is hard to track down

contributors as most articles were unnamed and when names were given, they were not indexed. The first traces of WEAA are in Volume 2 in 1872, with three entries on Free Speech, Ancient Libraries and Patent Laws. As described previously variations of his *Romance of Southport Sands* appeared in the *Co-operative News* in the 1870s. There are then a few occasional articles over the years.

In March 1905, W N Bamford, the editor, was one of the first people WEAA contacted in his desperate search for regular work. Bamford responded positively to his proposal and suggested how WEAA might contribute to an annual publication. Bamford was true to his word and published WEAA's submissions. There are five *Co-operative News* entries for WEAA in 1905, on the artist George Frederic Watts, Lancashire, St Andrews, vegetarianism, and an extensive review of Aylmer Maude's book on the Doukhobôrs. Henceforth WEAA appeared regularly, even having great fun with a 'Cosy Corner' feature for children under the pseudonym 'Goldpen.' His grandson Geoffrey had referred to this pseudonym in his edition of the *Treasury of Translations*, and now I finally tracked it down in the *Co-*

operative News.

WEAA freely expressed his political views in this sympathetic newspaper. His early article on Patent Laws was fierce in its condemnation of the restrictions placed on working people. [1066] In 1907 he wrote an amazing proposal for a Federation of Europe, a borderless, free trading zone that would ensure peace. [1067] His vision is enough to make one weep in post Brexit Britain. WEAA was in very good company in the *Co-operative News* with the likes of H G Wells, Arnold Bennett, and Leonard Woolf.

Bamford also advised WEAA of a new Co-operative Society publication, the cultural journal *The Millgate Monthly*. Starting in 1905, this was a beautifully illustrated, high-class journal, handsomely printed and bound. Copies now fetch high prices.

Following this advice WEAA produced several long articles and poems for *The Millgate Monthly* over the next few years. He seems to have had a free hand, writing pleasant pieces about favourite places and people, including old Millgate itself and Sussex, possibly with his own photographs. The second volume of

the *Millgate Monthly* has two outstanding examples of his critiques of artists, the *Art of Holman Hunt*, and the *Art of Frederic Shields*, the latter including unique personal information for they had first met as young men. WEAA's poems run throughout the *Millgate Monthly* and include some of his most powerful, especially those on the lives wasted by industrial work, *Footfalls in the Street* and *The Song of the Landless Men in the Towns*. In 1909 Bamford took up cudgels on WEAA's behalf when his poem *The Herb of Happiness* was plagiarised in the *Peoples' Friend*. The *Peoples' Friend* very properly rebuked their contributor.

WEAA's standing with artists enabled him to acquire splendid illustrations for some of his *Millgate Monthly* articles. WEAA's friend, the renowned artist Samuel Lawson Booth, supplied him with coloured plates for *Dante's Birthplace*, and then gifted him the oil painting. Other artist friends also provided him with rich illustrations, especially in the piece he wrote on Frederic Shields.

When space became a problem for WEAA's 'Cosy Corner' in the *Co-operative News*,

Bamford suggested it might be moved to *The Millgate Monthly* rather than end. This does not seem to have happened.

Henry Salt, WEAA's old comrade in the VS, was a pioneer member of the Humanitarian League. A formidable academic and reformer, Salt was fond of WEAA and his family and responded instantly to his appeal, commissioning WEAA to write articles for the *Humane Review*. Professor Mayor also stepped in offering a testimonial for WEAA to use for the Press Syndicate. He mentioned he was glad to hear that WEAA might edit *Fuller's Worthies* though this did not materialise.[1068]

AP letters in the following weeks show some positive developments. James Hoy took WEAA's suggestions of a school history of Manchester to the Education Committee, Florence A Pollard, writing on International Brotherhood notepaper, wanted him to temporarily edit an unspecified journal, seemingly unpaid. She was conscious 'We all feel that this is asking a great deal of you as we know how very busy you are.'[1069]
He pushed more proposals to *The Nation* for whom he already contributed pieces. William

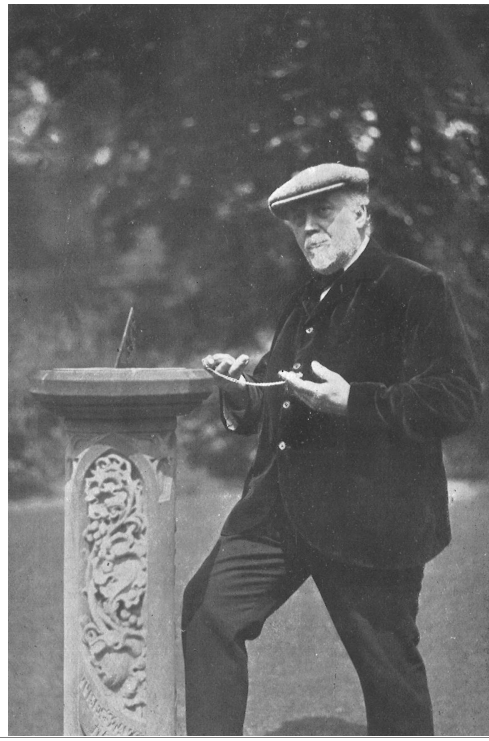
Lloyd Garrison's son always treated him with respect although sometimes declining pieces as of little interest to Americans. He also gently encouraged WEAA to be light and chatty.

WEAA expanded the range of journals where he might place his articles. The *Westminster Review* welcomed him as did the new journal *Reader's Review*. The International Society of the Apocrypha willingly accepted a paper for their journal *Deutero-Cananica*, enthusiastically debating some esoteric points. The Editor of the *Scottish Review* rejected one article as 'hardly of sufficient interest to our readers' but enthused over one on the LA and asked for more 'of literary rather than antiquarian interest.'[1070] The same Editor later asked WEAA to cut down on the long quotations and 'add a little more comment of your own.'[1071]

In fact, having to take notice of such advice sharpened up WEAA's style and helped him avoid his weaker practices. Some of his most admired articles were written after his retirement from the *Guardian*. Over the next few years, even though there were rejections, he appeared frequently in both established

and new journals. The National Home Reading Union was very positive about his contributions to *The Readers Review*, 'just what we want.'[1072] He wrote at least two articles for them on John Greenleaf Whittier and on Manchester in literature. As he came to terms with the new circumstances, WEAA still found time to write on deeply scholarly matters, following the usual route of publication in society transactions, often then reprinted as pamphlets. Being an antiquarian could still prove fruitful. His pamphlet on the discovery of the Angel Stone in Manchester Cathedral led to a request for further articles from the British Archaeological Association. All this must have gone some way to assuaging WEAA's hurt and his fears for his income. But it was one towering figure who proved his champion.

John Searle Ragland Phillips (1850- 1919)
WEAA and John Searle Ragland Phillips, known to his family as JSR, had been friends since they were youths, working in the centre of Manchester. Phillips now took on a major role in WEAA's life.



J. S. R. Phillips: courtesy Leeds Libraries

Born in 1850 in Pendleton Phillips scratched a basic education at a girls' boarding school run by his mother and aunt, topped by two years at a boys' private day school. His father died when he was a child and at twelve Phillips was earning his living in the wholesale drapery warehouse. He eventually escaped from the warehouses to the newspaper world he longed for. After a variety of posts from Kendal through to Bristol he became assistant editor of the *Yorkshire Post*, providing such

support for the frail editor Mr Palmer that he was appointed editor on Palmer's death in 1903. Like C P Scott he was revered, especially in Leeds, headquarters of the newspaper. Phillips was a professional of high standing, serving the Tory readership of the *Yorkshire Post* with quality reporting, and fair minded discussions of controversial views. He gave C P Scott expert advice during the 'War of the Taylor Succession.' Together with other leading editors Phillips was involved in deputations to Government and in battles over press standards.

Phillips and WEAA stayed in touch over the years. It would look from the AP letters that newspaper men were mutually supportive, often signalling opportunities or requesting favours. AP has several instances of such exchanges, involving variously WEAA, Alley, John Evans, Hawke, Lewin, and Phillips. WEAA wrote in haste to Alley in 1886 to alert him to a possible job at the *Leeds Daily News* where Phillips had been employed, 'The work is heavy and the salary proportionately light = £2 weekly.'

One of the saddest AP letters is an appeal from

a James Bailey to WEAA.[1073] He was once a Manchester journalist and then on the editorial staff of the *Yorkshire Post*. Chronic bronchitis, possibly consumption, led him to the Crumpsall Union Infirmary and then onto the streets. WEAA had helped him years ago and he was now desperate again. Bailey could see his experiences would make good copy but meanwhile he has no bed or food. Ironically, Bailey was right. Tales of workhouses, infirmaries, shelters, and the streets had formed a new branch of undercover investigative journalism, spearheaded by James Greenwood. There are no more letters from Bailey.

A letter Phillips wrote in 1902 is typically full of references and reminiscences; he referred to the help he had received from friends, including WEAA, when crippled with rheumatic gout some four years ago. He commented on WEAA's suggestions of publishers for Phillips' story *Martha*, compared notes on a mutual acquaintance, a Miss Richardson, and her refusal to marry the father of her child, prompting Phillips to write *Martha*, and reminisced about that 'always old boy' Joseph Radford, 'The many jests & hot

discussions we have had, the many pipes & cups of coffee!' [1074]

Yorkshire Post Column

This was the old friend WEAA turned to in his hour of need, and Phillips, eminent as he had become, responded generously. It was said of Phillips that he was imbued with 'the spirit of service to his fellow men. No one ever approached him for help or advice without getting it.'[1075] He replied swiftly to WEAA's news, addressing him as 'Dear Willie,' a rare informality even between friends. He apologised for dictating a reply as he was frantically busy and reassured WEAA he was sure he could help with review work. He suggested meeting up in Manchester, looked forward to a chat about old times, joked about WEAA being a 'thorough going patriarch,' and added he was becoming one himself.[1076] The whole letter is encouraging, and practical. Phillips saw the positive side that the superannuation was 'not without a suitable provision.' Phillips was probably more aware than WEAA of the perilous situation at the *Guardian*.

What WEAA needed was regular work, and in

a further letter he sounded Phillips out about a weekly column, the goal of *New Grub Street* hacks. Gently Phillips rejected the idea, both on grounds of space and the newspaper's policy, but offered to consider options carefully. By 1 May Phillips had devised the lifesaving, and face-saving, plan of 'a quantity of biographies.' He knew WEAA would be accurate and readable, and he offered a guinea and a half per column. The Tory readership was humorously referenced, Phillips writing, 'Of course where any political or Church matter is concerned we are on the side of the angels, that is the Conservative and Church party, and I know that your personal tendencies have always been on the liberal side.'

All worked out well and over the years WEAA contributed biographical sketches as agreed with Phillips. Phillips sent WEAA possible names, often with entertaining comments, and lively negotiations followed. Phillips wanted the tone to be 'light, philosophical & anecdotal' but judging by his comments on the lists he clearly wanted a spade called a spade, 'A Col [column] Andrew Carnegie, but please do not praise him too much. I always think

him a bounder.'[1077] WEAA crossed out names that did not appeal. On 30 January 1907 Phillips requested 'chatty and anecdotal' biographies of William Bailey, Dr Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, Mrs Fawcett, and Annie Besant, 'I know these will probably be something in your way.'[1078] Professor Kendall in the Geology Department of Leeds University was the obvious person to sketch Professor Boyd Dawkins as he once worked for him. But Phillips sounded out WEAA instead as, 'I know Kendall thought him a perfect beast, and hated him like poison.' [1079] Phillips did not let sentiment get in the way of business and on one rare occasion, sharply rebuked WEAA, 'Why should I commission you to write a sketch of Sir Squire Bancroft, seeing that you wrote on for us in 1906 and it is still unused in our pigeonholes?'[1080]

Phillips encouraged WEAA to report on other topics, such as the paper he gave to the RSL in 1908 on the authorship of a sequel to Coleridge's *Christabel*.[1081] The *Yorkshire Post* praised him fulsomely for this literary tour de force.

WEAA's investigations had been generally well

received in literary circles. A reader praised his article *A Quaker Highwayman* and asked if he might borrow the pamphlet mentioned with its curious reference to 'Tyburn near York.'[1082] WEAA kindly sent it. There are references in AP to WEAA's *Yorkshire Post* articles on *Temperance in Bridlington* and *Forged Antiqui*ties, the latter bringing a suggestion of plagiarism from Mr Shepherd of the Hull Municipal Museum. Phillips wrote to WEAA, 'I think you will be able to assure me that it is not.'[1083] WEAA certainly could. As well as the *Yorkshire Post* article there was his LCAS paper on this topic, published in the *TLCAS* 25 and then as a pamphlet.[1084] Modern historians have recognised WEAA's exceptional foresight in proposing forgeries should be catalogued by museums.

They conflicted mightily over garden cities with Phillips explaining at length why he condemned the idea. There is praise from Phillips for WEAA's verses on duty and most cheering of all fond comments such as this, 'You are always sunshiny internally.'[1085]

The candid, free spirited Phillips is a refreshing presence in AP. His vigorous

assistance was vital in restoring WEAA's spirits and more ventures with other publishers followed. WEAA's histories of Manchester societies were published in the *Manchester City News* in 1907 although the editor, John Cuming Walters, had declined a regular column for the same reasons as Phillips had. He approved of this limited series, 'The specimen will suit admirably. The chattier the articles are about bygone celebrities the better.'[1086] No one was as expert as WEAA in the inside stories of local societies.

Cobden Articles

Despite all the turmoil, WEAA pressed on with his plans for writing about a politician he had long admired, Richard Cobden. He had produced a *Cobden Bibliography* throughout several issues of *N&Q* in 1904,[1087] and followed this up with two articles in 1906.

WEAA's short paper, *Cobden and the Education Controversy*, is full of unexpected riches, from analysis of Cobden himself and the power of his speeches, to his first meeting with John Bright, and the ways debate was managed, 'The early Victorian method of political and social propaganda was largely by means of dinners. The belief that people could assemble

and listen to speeches without the support of meat or drink was still in the embryonic phase.' The disputes over secular education, Cobden's anger at the failure to recognise the reality of poverty, are brilliantly depicted by WEAA. There are echoes of Cobden's denouncements in WEAA's own pulpit speeches: he learnt from studying Cobden as he did from hearing Dickens.

WEAA knew exactly the tragedy of petty-minded disputes that dogged attempts to improve the quality of life. He concluded the paper with, 'The history of education in the nineteenth century is largely the story of these miserable sectarian squabbles. Even yet the nation does not realise how much it has lost, and is losing, by these squalid controversies.'[1088]

Cobden, Civilisation and Commerce is WEAA's account of an event on 26 October 1840 when there was a great gathering to set up a Manchester branch of the Society for the extinction of the Slave Trade and the Civilization of Africa. In his opening sentence WEAA showed his awareness of the increasing racism of the new century, 'A forgotten

controversy in which Richard Cobden took part deserves to be recalled in these days when the relation of Great Britain to what are conveniently styled “inferior races” frequently comes before the bar of public conscience.’[1089]

Cobden As A Citizen

In the aftermath of dismissal from the *Guardian* WEAA completed one of his finest works, still a valued source for historians. *Cobden as a Citizen* was published in 1907 by Fisher Unwin. There are some surprising twists in the history of its publication, as reflected in the AP correspondence.

Incorporate Your Borough

Richard Cobden was the prime mover in the incorporation of Manchester, finally achieved in 1838. The industrial age with its rapidly expanding cities needed democratic self-government, not the collapsing disorder of the ancient feudal rule of ‘aristocratic plunderers’[1090] like Manchester’s Sir Oswald Mosley, settled in Rufforth Hall in Staffordshire, whilst collecting £7000 a year from the hard-working citizens. Cobden put all his energies into winning the fierce battle for municipal reform. There were intense conflicts

with extreme radicals and Tories uniting against incorporation, both viewing it as a conduit for middle class power. From his house on Quay Street Cobden wrote a powerfully influential tract, *Incorporate Your Borough!* 5000 copies were printed in 1838 but despite much searching by bibliophiles, no surviving copies could be traced in the decades that followed.

Fisher Unwin and Richard Cobden's daughter Jane were married in 1882. Years later Jane Cobden Unwin came across a copy amongst family papers. Their brother-in-law was Thomas Cobden-Sanderson of Dove's Press fame, married to Cobden's daughter Julia. [Another daughter, Ellen, married the artist, Walter Sickert.] Cobden-Sanderson bound the pamphlet and on two occasions, with great concern for its safety, it was lent to WEAA. On the second occasion in 1904 WEAA borrowed it for the LCAS's Old Manchester exhibition.

Fisher Unwin debated at length with WEAA what to do with the pamphlet. He was determined to produce a book, worthy in content and form, in tribute to this family connections. He was used to consulting WEAA as a recognised Cobden expert. From 1903 onwards their correspondence covers Fisher Unwin's publication of Cobden's political papers, the bibliography WEAA was writing for *N&Q,* as well as planning the best use of the pamphlet.

The idea emerged between Fisher Unwin and WEAA of printing a facsimile copy of the pamphlet together with a history of Cobden in Manchester and a bibliography of his works, both authored by WEAA. There followed a great deal of business over the draft text of *Cobden as a Citizen*, then over the proofs, the illustrations, and the binding. Fisher Unwin aimed at a top-class product.

Its physical quality is outstanding. Various bookdealers describe the edition as being printed by Chiswick Press on untrimmed Batchelor's Hammer & Anvil handmade paper with a limp cream vellum gilt cover. The paper is certainly thick and the print stylish, including the antique device of a ligature c and t. I discovered from the AP letters that, although not mentioned in reference works, Thomas Cobden-Sanderson had a hand in the production.

In the end Fisher Unwin was bitterly disappointed that Manchester officials, councillors and eminent citizens did not buy the handsome copies on the scale he had anticipated. But the days of Richard Cobden were long past, and incorporation would seem a rather fusty topic in the new century.

WEAA's Text

My main surprise when I read WEAA's history of Cobden and Manchester's incorporation is that parts are pure comedy. Over the years WEAA must have attended thousands of meetings and this text reveals him as a humorous observer of the mechanisms. WEAA produced a riveting narrative. The account of the refusal of poor Mr Neild to continue as borough reeve is comic drama. WEAA clearly threw himself into selecting illustrations, researching the history, writing the accompanying text, and compiling the bibliography. Reflecting this, the AP correspondence from 1903 to 1907 is rich in Cobden investigations. Even during his preparations for the St Louis Exhibition WEAA responded to Fisher Unwin's queries. Unsurprisingly Fisher Unwin, rather curt to start with, becomes

warm in tone and there are invitations to visit the family home in Sussex to view their Cobden papers.

Cobden as Citizen may have disappointed Fisher Unwin as a financial venture, but it survives as a prime source for historians of the period. The admiring reviewer in the *Co-operative News* foresaw this, 'His book will find a permanent place in every library of consequence, and it should be in the hands of every serious student of social economy, and particularly of modern reform movements past and present.'[1091] Simon Morgan drew on the book for his article of *Cobden and Manches*ter in the *Manchester Region History Review*.[1092]

The book also defines WEAA's own political sympathies lay. Like Cobden he was a radical liberal but wary of extremists on either side. He understood Cobden's opponent, the turbulent radical Elijah Dixon, but saw the danger of demagogues,

'The extremist in politics, unless he is gifted with saving common sense, is often the worst enemy of sober reform. So the advocates of a municipal charter had to meet the opposition of the leaders both of the Conservative and of the radical element in town – thought the mass of the rank and file seem to have been wiser than their self-appointed guides.'[1093]

WEAA's conclusion reiterates the themes that guided his own life, 'Those who eat in the

sweat of their face may be grateful to Richard Cobden, for he not only sought to strengthen them for their toil with daily bread, but to sweeten it with the fruits of knowledge, of freedom, and of brotherhood.'[1094]
WEAA continued to write about Cobden with a paper, *Cobden and Secular Education*, published in the *Westminster Review*, January 1908.

Albert Pollard

As mentioned previously, Albert Pollard, the editor of *The Library*, had a spell of such contemptuous dismissals of WEAA's submissions together with endless querulous comments that even the mild WEAA was driven to challenge him. WEAA had endured Pollard for a long time but his struggles in the post *Guardian* era had taken its toll on his tolerance. There is a draft of WEAA's letter to Pollard, dated 2 June 1908. The first date of 31 May is crossed out. WEAA evidently took time to modify his exasperation, creditably resisting the impulse to return fire with fire. The draft shows several textual changes to calmer expressions. WEAA crossed out, 'If you adopted the same attitude all round you would have nothing for The Library to print.' But he

pressed Pollard firmly, 'In every paper I have sent you there has been some addition to bibliographic knowledge. Why have you uniformly rejected them? I confess I am completely puzzled.'[1095] It was WEAA who had first proposed a Bibliographical Society in *N&Q,* and he had contributed many significant articles over the years to its journal, *The Library*. Pollard wisely apologised and modified his tone, returning to his former fulsome praise of WEAA's articles. He made mention of a breakdown and the pressure he was under, 'Perhaps other worries made me take a jaundiced view of your paper.'[1096]

However, he seems to have paid WEAA very little, half a guinea for one column, though this may be a consequence of *The Library*'s financial struggles. The librarian John MacAlister had taken on the journal but found he was incurring losses. As he described to WEAA, he accepted the journal was a hobby that he would pay for with a hundred-pound annual deficit but no further. Librarians wanted the journal to continue but it was the old story of copies being lent around rather than purchased, 'there should be some shame in this to our L.A. friends.'[1097] MacAlister

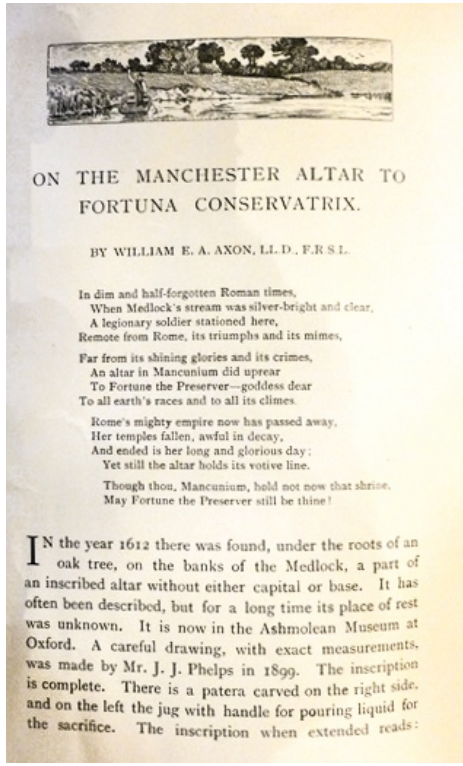
seems to have been as outspoken as Pollard, in one letter being scathing at a temperance question WEAA had raised and signing himself offensively as 'Yours alcoholically.'[1098]

Surviving

WEAA's cheerful optimism sometimes foundered as fashions changed. He consulted C E Doble of the Clarendon Press on whether there would be interest in his paper on *Comus* as an introduction to Milton. WEAA had known Doble since 1875 when he was editor of the *Academy*, and he confided his uncertainty to him, 'And I am afraid that many of our people, and even many of our elementary teachers are quite untouched by the real spirit of literature.' Doble, depressed by the waters of Harrogate, 'a delusion and a snare' that had left him feeling even worse, did not debate the point but promised to follow up the matter of the Oxford Tercentenary celebration of Milton. The Tercentenary had already been commemorated by the RSL, and WEAA's paper, *Milton and the Liberty of the Press*, was published in the memorial book.[1099] Milton, and *Comus* especially, had been long been significant to WEAA with his first references

appearing in the 1870s. The MLC Papers captured a sparkling exchange between Dr Samelson and WEAA. They batted quotations to and fro with WEAA standing firm on Milton as the 'poet of teetotalism and of vegetarianism.'[1100] There was much laughter and applause over this exchange.[1101] WEAA had written about Fletcher's influence on *Comus*, on Milton's sources of inspiration, on the influence of George Peele's *Old Wife's Tale* on *Comus*, and in a revealing article *The Moral Purpose of Milton's Poetry* in *Oddfellows' Magazine*, he noted Milton's 'highest moments' were Pythagorean. I have not found a later paper on Comus. WEAA's determination to extract income from his writing paid off. By March 1909 his friend H M Selby was drawn to exclaim, 'What a variety of literary work you have in hand!'[1102]

Fortuna Conservatrix



ON THE MANCHESTER ALTAR TO FORTUNA CONSERVATRIX.

BY WILLIAM E. A. AXON, LL.D., F.R.S.L.

In dim and half-forgotten Roman times,
When Medlock's stream was silver-bright and clear,
A legionary soldier stationed here,
Remote from Rome, its triumphs and its mimes,

Far from its shining glories and its crimes,
An altar in Mancunium did uprear
To Fortune the Preserver—goddess dear
To all earth's races and to all its climes.

Rome's mighty empire now has passed away,
Her temples fallen, awful in decay,
And ended is her long and glorious day:
Yet still the altar holds its votive line.

Though thou, Mancunium, hold not now that shrine,
May Fortune the Preserver still be thine!

IN the year 1612 there was found, under the roots of an oak tree, on the banks of the Medlock, a part of an inscribed altar without either capital or base. It has often been described, but for a long time its place of rest was unknown. It is now in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. A careful drawing, with exact measurements, was made by Mr. J. J. Phelps in 1899. The inscription is complete. There is a patera carved on the right side, and on the left the jug with handle for pouring liquid for the sacrifice. The inscription when extended reads:

On 10 February 1905, before his troubles started, WEAA presented a paper to LCAS, *On the Manchester Altar to Fortuna Conservatrix*. This fragment, dedicated to the goddess of fortune, had been discovered in 1612 on the banks of the Medlock. After passing through 'divers hands' it made its way to the Ashmolean where it was re-discovered amongst the Arundel marbles by W.Thompson Watkin, the Victorian archaeologist. WEAA's introductory poem included a wish that although the fragment was now in the Ashmolean, the luck would remain with

Manchester. He must have wryly wished for a bit of luck himself:

> ‘Though thou, Mancunium, hold not now that shrine,
> May Fortune the Preserver still be thine!’

In the 1970s the Ashmolean allowed the altar to return home, albeit on loan: it was a popular item with visitors to the Manchester Museum but sadly is no longer on display.[1103]

CHAPTER 30

THE SIMPLE LIFE

William Harrison's Knitting Machine
After his initial panic WEAA settled down to supplementing his five-year pension with literary earnings and fees for lectures. There must have been returns too from his investments in the Fountain Street Restaurant and in William Harrison's knitting machine.

WEAA met the Harrisons through the VS and became close friends with the couple. William Harrison had designed the knitting machine with the principled aim of producing good quality hosiery at affordable prices. As well as giving the VS a hundred £1 shares, Harrison encouraged members to become shareholders. Harrison launched his original company in 1856, incorporating it in 1894. At some stage WEAA became involved. An advertisement for The Harrison Patent Knitting Machine Company in January 1895 lists him as one of the directors.[1104]

The firm became a leader in the field with extensive works established on Upper Brook Street, Gorton, and won many prizes, 'Triumphant Award at Paris. The only winner in the world of 4 gold medals and 22 other

honours.'[1105] According to Grace's guide[1106] it was the first firm to use photography in press advertising in *The Parrott* 1887. This may well have been WEAA's idea. WEAA included a short history of the company in his *VM* article on the Harrisons, covering its development and awards as well as praising Harrison himself, 'An excellent man of business, he is also a kind and considerate employer, treating his employees as equals, and co-partners in a common enterprise. An organ is provided for their use, and the girls concluded the day with music and singing.'[1107] The firm flourished for many decades, closing in 1969.

Leaving Manchester

Sensibly WEAA and Setta decided on a radical change to boost their income, the practical step of a vegetarian guest house, developed in conjunction with prominent VS members, most likely the Harrisons. It was to showcase the benefits of the vegetarian way of life. The VS loyally helped WEAA and Setta in their hour of need with this opportunistic scheme of putting ideas into action. Setta was appointed as Warden with Alfred Broadbent supervising the diets. Southport, well known to WEAA as a

health resort, was perfect for such a plan. A long article in the *Manchester City News*, 17 March 1906, almost certainly penned by WEAA, celebrated the opening, explaining the principles and the chance non-vegetarians would be given 'to practically try "the simpler and higher life."'[1108] The food, drink and natural remedies on offer are detailed: even the tea was oxygenated to reduce tannin.

The move was timed to happen as soon as WEAA's salary finished at the end of 1905, replaced by his pension. WEAA and Setta left Manchester in the New Year 1906. Fisher Unwin in a letter dated 4 January noted the change of address. Dorothy briefly stayed on as a boarder at the Loreto Convent in Altrincham. After she joined her parents in Southport Dorothy attended Castle School: a letter concerning the return of a cloak confirms she was there by at least early 1907. [1109]

Certainly, WEAA and Setta did not broadcast the move to Southport. Friends sent social invitations to them in late December, evidently having no idea of the plan. Father Vincent Naish of the Church of Holy Name

where Setta was a regular parishioner wrote to Setta in late December, praising WEAA's *Treasury of Translations.* He attached a poem inspired by the verses, sent his good wishes for the New Year but seemed to have no idea a move was imminent,

> 'To W.E.A. Axon (on reading his Treasury of Translations)
> Broad mind and kindly heart! Thy verses spell
> The meaning of a riddle still unread.-
> As wayward streams in bright confusion tell
> The crystal secret of One Fountain Head'[1110]

G Tartaglione, living nearby at 10 Brighton Street, Oxford Road, wrote that he had set WEAA's poem *Babe's Grave* to music and invited him to an at home to hear his pupil Miss Levey sing it.[1111]

Sir Adolphus William Ward, a Cambridge historian, and regular AP correspondent, had written to WEAA on 5 January seeking help for an illustration for an edition of *Mary Barton*. In his follow up letter two weeks later, he realised WEAA had moved to Southport. He thanked WEAA for his reply, appreciative that it was given 'in the midst of so many Crises and discomfort' and referred to 'life between land and water – and without books!'[1112]

AP correspondents sometimes commiserated with each other over the traumatic business of moving a personal library. WEAA was used to moves around Manchester, but this was a major lifestyle change: he may have been forced to cull his collection. There were 8-10,000 books when he entertained the library assistants in 1900, and only 2,000 later advertised as an attraction at the Southport guest house. Of course, he may have stored some or hidden them away from guests. Pruning collections can also promote new growth as collectors well know. The last photos of WEAA in 1913 show impressively crowded bookcases.

The only other references to the move are from some curious AP letters in March when WEAA was accused of leaving a neglected dog at the old house. The RSPCA inspector who had received the complaint thought it could not be true and asked a friend of WEAA's, the Unitarian Minister, the Rev. Dendy Agate to investigate. WEAA was completely exonerated. A spiteful woman had made the accusation, and the RSPCA sent their apologies to WEAA. Their incredulity was understandable for WEAA was well known as a campaigner against animal cruelty and vivisection. Envelopes and postcards are useful finds amongst the AP letters, establishing addresses and dating house moves. The first ones for Southport arrived in March, sent to the Axons' new home at 3 Albany Road.

Location
Southport, even its slightly depressed current state, is full of charm. It is as if Harrogate, with its ornate hotels, spas, teashops, and wide walkways has drifted to the shifting sands of the Irish Sea to gaze out at the watercolour brush of the distant sea.

Southport emerged as a new town in the eighteenth century: it developed as a popular but refined resort, catering for both trippers and more cultured visitors, well served first by the canal and then by an extensive rail network. Southport was renowned for 'the extreme salubrity of its climate'.[1113] The

residents were predominantly prosperous, as evidenced in the quality of the houses, streets, and public buildings, often endowed by individuals. Many residents were from Liverpool, rich from trade and retired, or commuting.

Much of WEAA's Southport is still there. Judging by the *Romance of Southport Sands* he was familiar with the town from his courtship days. He, Jane, and the children often had trips there, sometimes with Joe Haddow. Joe's view was, 'Southport was never a place for people who wanted excitement. The neighbouring town of Blackpool supplied that and attracted thousands when Southport drew hundreds.'[1114] He and Sophie found it little altered when they revisited in 1939.

AP records WEAA's frequent recuperative stays, recovering from respiratory or rheumatic illnesses. Jane too tried Southport air to combat her weakness. In 1888 WEAA convalesced first at St Leonards and then at Southport at Lowe House, 7 Sussex Road. His good friend and old Guardian colleague, Arthur W Croxton, wrote to him there, cheering him with gossip and jokes, including of course a gibe at the elusive sea:

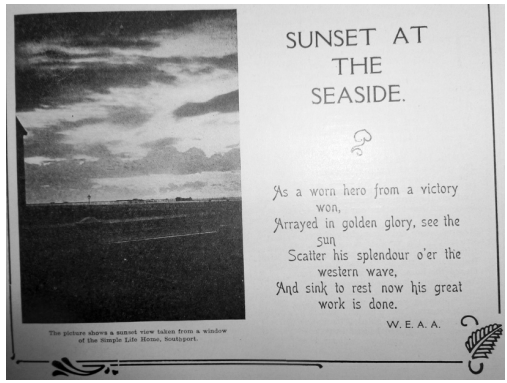
> 'Very glad indeed to hear you have had so pleasant a stay so far at Southport, not withstanding the absence of anything answering to the name of a tide. I have no

> doubt, however, that what little dissipation you require you will easily find in visits to the Marine Park.'[1115]

Southport's vanishing sea, pushed away by the relentless accretion of the sands, has always triggered amusement. Catastrophe hit Southport in the late 1870s when the sea receded even further, leaving the south beach a filthy swamp. Developers in Southport turned disaster to opportunity with the creation of lakes, gardens, and entertainments, basically providing an artificial seaside running parallel to the distant sea.

3 Albany Road

WEAA and Setta found an ideal location for their new enterprise. They were wise to call their business The Simple Life rather than Sea View, the name first attached to the house. The house stands just after the large house on the corner of Albany Road and the Promenade. The promenade gives entrancing views of the Marine Lake and the North Island but rarely does the sea appear as more than a distant haze, a mile out beyond the pier. WEAA proudly used a photograph taken from the window of The Simple Life to accompany his verse, *Sunset at the Seaside*, in the *Millgate Monthly*.[1116] Presumably he took the photograph although some of the guests were fellow Kodak enthusiasts.


SUNSET AT THE SEASIDE.
As a worn hero from a victory won,
Arrayed in golden glory, see the sun
Scatter his splendour o'er the western wave,
And sink to rest now his great work is done.
W. E. A. A.
The picture shows a sunset view taken from a window of the Simple Life Home, Southport.

There have been changes of course since the Edwardian period, but in recent years the restoration of the lakes, the revitalised pier, the second longest in the UK, the glorious Hesketh Park, and Botanic Gardens, saved by volunteers, and the magnificent buildings along the Promenade with Lord Street running parallel at the back of all this, show how well The Simple Life was placed.

3 Albany Road is still there but most of its Victorian features have been wiped away, leaving a stark building that could easily be modern. It is a tall house, the three floors and attics now converted to flats, all managed by the Albany Court Company. It is a bleak building although a large tree still flourishes in the back.

Visitors
Victorian Southport achieved a happy balance between residents and visitors, providing a variety of both indoor and outdoor amusements. It was predominantly a middle-class town.

At 3 Albany Road Setta catered for vegetarians, predominantly members of the VS, and likely to be cultured as well as keen on health. There was plenty on offer. Just down the road was the magnificent building of the Victoria Baths, now the Victoria Leisure Club, offering pools, slipper baths, a gymnasium for men and ‘entirely new Turkish

Baths'. The resplendent Smedley Hydro, now the General Register Office, was at nearby Birkdale, and the humbler Kenworthy's Hydro with daily rates was near the pier and Lord Street. Southport like St Andrews is famous as a golf town. There were links within walking distance of 3 Albany Road. The lakes, joined up in 1895 'gave Victorian Southport, at last, a large and placid tract of artificial sea, suitable for boating, sailing, and yachting.'[1117]

Nearby too was the Convalescent and Sea-bathing Hospital, a colossal red-brick gothic complex, now converted into apartments. Strangely enough this was one of the inspirations for Mervyn Peake's Gormenghast castle. He was a patient there in 1942. The distant sea, the mists, low tides, and sands wove themselves into his traumatised poems. [1118]

As well as indoor sea-bathing, Southport offered golf, boating, and gentle strolls on the vast sands and extensive gardens[1119]Guests who required cultural as well as healthy pursuits would find societies, lectures, recitals, museums, the richly endowed Atkinson Library, Music Hall performers at the Winter

Gardens, and the Opera House.

Advertising The Simple Life Home

Setta organised the running of the guest house, placing advertisements in *VM*, regional newspapers and later in the new Suffragette journal, the *Vote*. The railways brought visitors to Southport from all over the country. Some of Setta's guests lived as far away as Scotland and Germany.

The first advertisement I can trace was placed in the *London Daily News* on 24 April 1906. It was very basic and did not specify the vegetarian regime, but the clue is there in the use of 'pure', '"The Simple Life Home". Sea View. Albany Road. Southport. Pure food, health, comfort 25 s. a week'. The advertisement was repeated for the three months following.

There were more extensive advertisements that conveyed the flavour of The Simple-Life Home experience. *VM* gave extensive quotations from the *Sheffield Telegraph* and the *Millgate Monthly*.[1120] The descriptions show that simplicity was not confined to food and that the house offered a refreshing freedom from clutter and over ornate furnishings:

> ‘From the *Sheffield Telegraph*. THE HOUSE. Imagine a house, spaciously built, and furnished with just those things which are really needful for health, comfort and the refinements of existence. That is the Simple-Life Home. The chairs in the dining-room are of plain wood, with rush bottoms ; but an artist has designed them. In the drawing-room there is a writing table, a couch, and basket chairs for lounging in. On the chimney piece is a bit of choice cloissone, or of graceful China, no more.
>
> From the *Millgate Monthly*.
> Refinement and the best in art and literature make it an ideal home…We were amazed at the variety of food, and charmed with the refined manner of serving it…Our week at the Simple-Life Home passed far too quickly. We returned delighted with our visit, better in health and spirits and prepared to face life’s battles with renewed strength.’

A weighty mission statement appeared in another advertisement, ‘A Guest House and Home of Rest, founded to teach the Simpler Life in relation to Food for the maintenance of health and the Prevention of Disease’.[1121] ‘Alicia’ in the *London Daily Ne*ws gave a publicity boost to The Simple Life Home. A selling point was clearly that the simple life

was promoted through enjoyment rather than via text books:

> ‘Moreover, a few people at least are reducing the simple life to practice, for the promoters of the Simple Life Home at Southport send me interesting details about a guest house and home rest “founded to teach the simple life in relation to food for the maintenance of health, the prevention of disease, and the promotion of longevity.” Although the diet rules, which are drawn up by Dr. Albert Broadbent, the well known food expert, are well defined, it is noteworthy that “no books on health or dietetics will be supplied”—which sounds a distinctly cheerful proviso.’[1122]

In fact, the guests did have access to a rare collection of books, predominantly realting to the arts and literature, as is known from a later advertisement, ‘Southport Resting Home, 3, Albany Road, on Promenade. Vegetarian Diet. Refines home. 25 sh. Weekly. Board-Residence. 2000 books in Library,-Write, Warden.[1123]

The Simple Life Home cleverly projected cosy

comfort. This is the advertisement Setta placed in the *VM* in 1908, 'It has been arranged to hold a CHRISTMAS PARTY at the SIMPLE-LIFE HOME. The Guests will be made very comfortable, the House being pleasant and roomy. Southport is one of the mildest places in the country in Winter. The House overlooks the sea; stands in one of the pleasantest parts of the promenade. Early application for places will be necessary.'[1124]

The dinner service for the guests was of the very best, judging by the last one used. Carefully packed away it has survived to the present day, and Veronica Boys, Dorothy's granddaughter, has a letter from the Wedgwood Museum that confirms it is 'Queen's Ware (fine earthenware) with print, gilt and enamelled "Eastern Flowers" pattern', manufactured at the old Etruria Wedgwood works in 1909.'

The Concept of the Simple Life

The name WEAA and Setta gave to their business was a weighty one, sending out all the right signals. The simple life concept embraced a whole bundle of associations that dated back to classical times, finding renewed impetus in reaction to the industrial age. There is an invaluable exploration of the complexities of this amorphous movement in the thesis by Julia Twigg, *The Vegetarian Movement in England, 1847-1981*.[1125] She describes the different manifestations

emerging in the late nineteenth century when ‘the idea of the simple life achieved a new potency, and it became particularly closely connected with the idealisation of nature.’[1126]

Fussiness, elaboration, rigid etiquette all depended on the drudgery of servants. Moving towards a simple life enabled people to take the revolutionary step of doing things for themselves. Henry Salt, WEAA’s vegetarian comrade and founder of the Humanitarian League, threw up his position as an Eton school master. What shocked people most was when his wife, the indomitable Kate, engaged in her own housework and even discovered satisfaction in the tasks. A modern view would be that Henry Salt should have donned on an apron as well. Wives of reformers too frequently ended up wasting their talents on drudgery.

Unlike many middle class households, the Axons only had minimal domestic help. Census information is useful. In 1871 there was no servant residing in WEAA and Jane’s household but by 1881 there is the eighteen-year-old Mary Palmer from Devizes, and then in 1882 Joe mentioned the maid, Betsy. The Bowdon household, as recorded in 1891 after Jane’s death, had a servant, Elizabeth J Porter, age twenty-six and from Lancashire. After Setta’s death WEAA returned to Manchester where the 1911 census records Eliza Jagger, age thirty and from Lancashire, as a servant.

Without a census in the Southport period, there is no way of tracing whether there was a live in servant at The Simple Life. WEAA and Setta would surely have had some daily help at least for cleaning, making beds, washing, and serving meals. It appears Setta was the cook, organising her own vegetarian cuisine as well as managing the business.

Social Networks
As well as the backing of the VS, WEAA’s multiple networks of vegetarian, temperance, literary, and antiquarian contacts helped The Simple Life Home to flourish. Several people were prompted by fond memories of WEAA to combine a seaside stay with renewing their friendship.

As early as March 1906 Charles Thomas Clough, the eminent Edinburgh geologist, wrote to him in response to orders WEAA had placed for maps and postcards, presumably for his guests' use. He wrote warmly, sending remembrances to Setta and hoping 'you are having a succession of visitors such as you wish for.'[1127] He gave his regards for a Mr Dalby who might still be with them. Clough came from a wealthy professional background. He was educated at Rugby and Cambridge and married into a ship owning family. The VS brought WEAA and Clough together, breaking down the barriers of status and money.

The distinguished Chief Librarian of Nottingham, John Potter Briscoe, and his wife were guests in Easter week 1907. Briscoe wrote affectionately to WEAA, 'I have seen so little of you for years that I am looking forward with pleasure to some chat with you.'[1128] They shared many principles and experiences. Briscoe was passionate in believing public libraries should serve all. He pioneered services for children, emigrants, and the disadvantaged, energetically transforming Nottingham libraries. Like WEAA Briscoe was a founder member of the LA, a bookman, local

history writer and antiquarian.

A keen photographer, Briscoe sent WEAA some of his holiday shots, portraits of the family, and 'the lake in flood tide when the hardy amateur marines were attempting to get their boats over the Southport barrier reef.'[1129] From a reference in his correspondence Briscoe was probably a temperance man but it is unclear whether he was also a vegetarian. However, he was enthusiastic about the food at Sea View as he called it, following up at home Setta's 'special kind of food,' nibbling too on ground nuts, pine kernels and the 'special biscuits' for which The Simple Life Home became renowned.

William Andrews: a Loyal Friend

Back in September 1899, WEAA and the Hull publisher William Andrews were discussing various literary projects. Andrews then raised a personal matter: could WEAA advise him on reducing his weight from fourteen to eleven stone, perhaps drawing up menus for him.[1130] Andrews combined his health quest with supporting his friend's new venture when he stayed for a week at the Simple Life in the summer of 1906.

Both he and WEAA were contributors to the very first volume of *Millgate Monthly*, Andrews writing a four page article, *A Week in a Simple Life Home*.[1131] This is a real scoop as Andrews uniquely detailed the regime. It was also brilliant publicity for the Axons: the high-class *Millgate Monthly* was a Co-operative Society publication, and many of the readers would have been vegetarians and potential guests. Andrews also projected Southport as a charming and desirable resort: it would already be well known to many of the readers as the Co-operative Society was primarily Manchester based.

Andrews admits he was no vegetarian, and friends had warned that the house would likely be full of 'cranks.' Instead, he found delightful company, intelligent and animated, tolerant of differences in religious and political views.

Breakfast was at 8.30 am, with poems and hymns being sung at the piano: the poets ranged from Tennyson, Burns, Edwin Waugh, John Keble, Charles Kingsley, Lucy Larcom, and others through to Ebenezer Eliot, the Corn-law rhymer. Setta presided over a sumptuous breakfast of surprise dishes, and 'home-made brown and white bread, toast, oatcakes, biscuits, nut savoury, grated nuts, eggs, honey, marmalade, the best of butter,

tea, coffee and milk.' We are back to *Little Derwent's Breakfast*. WEAA gave a motto for the day, either his own words or a quotation, promoting thoughtful discussion and meditation. After morning strolls and pleasures in Southport, guests would return for the mid-day meal, of 'two savouries, potatoes, steamed vegetables, milk or other plain pudding, and fruit,' followed by music and conversation, and then the refreshed guests would depart on an afternoon of more strolls and excursions. The evening meal was at 5.30 pm: again, Setta excelled herself with a variety of excellent food, 'brown and white bread, and butter, toast, biscuits, salad, home-made cheese, potted nuts, sandwiches, wholemeal cake, gingerbread, digestive tea, hot milk, fruit, and other dishes,' all served in a 'refined manner.' Supper was vegetable soup or hot milk. All these dietary arrangements were devised by Albert Broadbent. Music, song, story, and an evening hymn concluded the day: Sunday evening was given to a sacred concert and a talk from WEAA. Andrews described the library of 3000 books, enjoyed by the guests: fact, fiction, and poetry but no books on dietetics and health, and guests were

requested not to bring them. Presumably Setta and WEAA wanted a cheerful, relaxed atmosphere without worried hypochondria or discussions of ill health. It was not a convalescent home but a ‘haven of rest and good fellowship’ as Andrews summarised it all. He noted that ‘social distinctions do not enter into the life of the house.’ The house itself was light and airy with large, simply furnished rooms. The booklet for guests had no set rules but, ‘It was explained that the founders of the home would endeavour to conduct it on simple lines. It was explained how the elaboration of life and the luxury so prevalent to-day would be purposedly avoided, as being detrimental to health, longevity, and a happy life.’ To top all this, Andrews included a photograph of The Simple Life Home, the only one it seems in existence.

A WEEK IN A SIMPLE LIFE HOME.

BY

WILLIAM ANDREWS.

SOUTHPORT may be called a man-made place; but man has done his work well, and planned one of the best holiday and health resorts in Great Britain. It may be designated a romance in bricks and mortar. Stately buildings, broad streets, charming gardens, pleasant parks, and well-wooded slopes occupy the site of sand-hills. William Sutton, better known as "The Old Duke," in 1792, noticed a few people visiting the seashore to bathe in the summer months. It occurred to this shrewd man that he might make money if he erected a house of entertainment where refreshments and rest were provided. He collected the wreckage of vessels, and reared a wooden public-house at what is now the junction of Lord-street and Duke-street. A memorial lamp marks the site. It was six years later that the now familiar name of Southport was given to the place. The rapidity of its rise has been marvellous. In 1801 it had a population of 2,096, and in 1901 it had reached a total of about 50,000, without including the extensive residential village of Birkdale. Within a radius of forty miles is a population of 4,000,000, and for those desiring a change for health combined with refined pleasure, "Sunny Southport" is the favourite holiday resort.

THE SIMPLE LIFE HOME, SOUTHPORT.

The main artery of the town is Lord-street, one of the finest roads in the country. On one side leafy trees and charming gardens, with a great variety of choice flowers; on the opposite side are fine shops, which seem to give an inexhaustibility of pleasure to the ladies. Lord-street has the appearance of a boulevard. In it are situated the chief public buildings. The trees on certain nights during the season are lighted with thousands of coloured electric lamps, which give a fairy-like effect to the scene.

Another delightful road is the Promenade; it is wide, skirting a marine park full of flowers, and a marine lake alive with electric launches and small craft, affording plenty of water from the sea, and quite safe for boating. On the sands the children are busy from morning until night, with the assistance of their proud parents, building castles, and enjoying other seaside amusements. The sea is leaving the borough, and a long pier has been erected to reach it. A ride in an electric train, or a stroll along the pier, soon enables the visitor to reach the sea. At the pier-head music and tea may be enjoyed, and the endless movements of the water, with its lights and shades, and ships, may be watched. Distant, but charming views of Wales and the hills of Cumberland may be obtained.

Five Stars

The extensive AP coverage of the Southport years shows this was a busy period for WEAA with his new ventures into publishing and more time to devote to reform. There are sufficient glimpses of The Simple Life Home to prove that it did fulfil its promise to the guests, providing a peaceful sanctuary, an experience of enjoying pure food and living.

James C Bathgate, a dedicated vegetarian and member of the Band of Hope, journeyed from Selkirk, enduring changes at Preston and Carlisle stations ‘to enjoy a wholesome and restful life with a prospect of varied and congenial company’ at 3 Albany Road. (In his letter he also referred to the monstrosity of the ‘Gollywog’ toy, surely one of the first instances

of disgust at the racist caricature.)[1132]

Non-vegetarians were welcome, but no concessions made for their diet. Setta must have hoped for conversion as outlined in the mission statement. Frank J Eastlake from Peeblesshire commented lightly, ‘You have some lederhosen ladies staying with you just now, I think. I trust they will like the experiment – I feel sure they will not sigh for a diet that includes the “defunct”’.[1133]

A Manchester friend, the accountant George Payne wrote in detail, rather too much detail as regards his knee and constipation, remarking how much his health had improved at The Simple Life Home and that his wife was now trying out some of Setta’s recipes. He wrote affectionately of the congenial times that he and his family had spent there with friends of ‘the old guard’; Mr Porter, the Misses Nichol and Verity as well as new Southport acquaintances ‘the energetic Miss Hopkins and the genial Mr John Clarke’. Wistfully he wrote, ‘I often think of the many happy days spent at 3 Albany Road and catch myself picturing what you are all doing at certain times of the day – which I can do very

well, as all goes like clock-work.'[1134]

It was George Payne who also indicated that for some The Simple Life was indeed a home from home, sending his regards 'to Miss Nichol and any other friends remaining of that small and select party who lived together at your house so long and so happily.'[1135] There is a feeling here of the guests forming some sort of temporary family together.

William Canning, the Secretary of the Manchester, Salford and District Temperance Union, remembered fondly the magical evenings of The Simple Life Home, hosted by WEAA 'and his charming wife.' Sometimes on a Sunday there were hymns, addresses and reading aloud but usually the evenings were passed with literary conversation, 'all mournful topics being excluded.' Canning described how WEAA was an unsurpassable talker at these evenings but never monopolised the conversation. WEAA encouraged cheerful stories and discussion, avoiding conflict by his sympathetic approach to differing views, 'His numerous friends were often surprised by his catholicity of spirit. This feature in his character had been noticed by

several recent writers, and very early in my acquaintance with him I noticed this trait and mentioned it to him. His reply was equally characteristic, "That he always made a point in finding out how much he could agree with the views of his opponents."'[1136]

Swedenborg

Charles Higham, the Manchester bookseller, attended the New-Church conference in Southport in 1908. The New-Church Society, basing its doctrine on Emanuel Swedenborg, had links with the Bible Christian Church, and WEAA had many friends amongst the members. (Originally it was a split at the Swedenborgian chapel in Salford that led to William Cowherd founding the Bible Christian Church. In 1809.) After the Conference, Higham spent a very pleasant hour with WEAA 'in the well-stocked Library of the house in Albany Road.'[1137] Higham Identified two outcomes of the 'Southport book-talk.' One was Higham's own three-fold article on the Bible Christian Church, inspired by the talk, and later followed by WEAA's history of the church. The other was introducing WEAA to *The Bibliography of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg,*[1138]sparking a significant interest

for WEAA. There is almost a Cagliostro type of delight in WEAA's exuberant talk to RSL in 1909 on *Swedenborg as a Man of Letters and Book Lover*, reprinted in *The New-Church Magazine,* and as a pamphlet.[1139] The Swedish seer, astronomer, scientist, literary scholar, an extraordinary and controversial personality, kindled WEAA's imagination. He was enthralled by the romantic adventures of the theft and restoration of Swedenborg's skull, the removal of his body from London to Sweden. He then gave a talk to the VS in Manchester, *Was Swedenborg a Vegetarian?* This was reprinted on *Morning Light*.

City Streets

WEAA was essentially an urban man, fascinated by his city and its layers of history. He also delighted in nature, green spaces, birds, and flowers, trying to bring the two together with his support for public parks, clean air, and his active involvement in window box and backyard gardening campaigns. Like many others, he needed his periodical escapes from the polluted mirk of Manchester, escaping to the seaside, the Welsh hills or gentle Sussex, but he was always drawn back to the bustle of the city. Southport was a good compromise.

In 1888 WEAA was the guest of honour at the MLC Christmas dinner. George Milner as President gave an affectionate account of WEAA, 'I have never heard him in all my life speak maliciously or even unkindly of any man living,' balanced with sly digs at his aged appearance, 'I remember once, gentlemen, meeting him in the passages of the Chetham College, carrying five or six large folios with very great difficulty, and I thought I had never seen a man look so like one of the mediaeval tenants of that building as he.' In

his response WEAA played with the expected humour but ended on a serious note, encapsulating the vision that haunted him:

> ‘I have had a dream of a fair city, of one where the streams should be unpolluted, where the air should be pure, where trees should grow, where flowers should blossom ; a city where little children did not die before their time ; a city where the great thinkers and poets of the past were the daily companions of the community, where the laws of health were known and observed, and where the rich did not dig pitfalls for the feet of the poor.’[1140]

In a small way, Southport and The Simple Life must have reminded WEAA of this vision.

Art Circles: Samuel Lawson Booth

As WEAA recovered his spirits and income in Southport he inevitably found his way into local activities. His name appears in the context of Southport Food Reform, the Atkinson Library, and the Southport Literary and Philosophical Society. He struck up friendships with sympathetic residents like the artist Samuel Lawson Booth, adding him to his already extensive network in the art world.

Samuel Lawson Booth (1836-1928) was well known in Southport not only as an artist but as an alderman, mayor, and magistrate. Born in Leeds, he was one of the first to teach drawing at Wakefield Mechanics Institute. His paintings, some reflecting his journeys in the East, still fetch high prices. Members of the VS funded his portraits of WEAA and William Harrison. As Mathilde Hompes related, the generous response to the appeal enabled their spouses to be painted as well. It is a pity that three of these portraits have disappeared. The last trace of WEAA’s portrait was on 27 October 1916 when Ernest wrote to Booth acknowledging its safe arrival

and confirming that it would be placed in the Reference Library. Setta's richly coloured portrait has recently been discovered by the family and restored.

There are some Lawson Booth paintings in the Atkinson in Southport, and a striking full-length portrait of Samuel Laycock at the Grundy, Blackpool. Lawson Booth never quite made it into the Manchester scene. WEAA tried to help Lawson Booth through his contacts, continuing his efforts even after he had left Southport in 1910. In 1911 there is a letter from Walter Butterworth politely explaining why there is no slot for an exhibition as space is so limited 'until we get a new Gallery in Manchester.'[1141] Lawson Booth was grateful for WEAA's championship on this and other occasions but felt that 'kissing goes by favour.'[1142] His nineteen letters in AP, running from 1909 to 1911, develop rapidly in terms of warmth, informality, and trust. WEAA strove to find commissions for Lawson Booth and was repaid by gifts of sketches.

But what is key in the AP correspondence is the value Lawson Booth places on WEAA's opinion of art works. Lawson Booth seems to have been a formidable character and prone to

scathing comments. His praise for a forthcoming Pre Raphaelite exhibition was mixed with his denunciation of those who need monetary worth to assess art. In WEAA's case, however, his tone is always respectful though there may be a sarcastic edge to his comment when asking WEAA to promote him to the Manchester Art Committee, 'I don't see why he should not take your opinion on Art Matters. You know as much as many on the Committee.'[1143] In his last letters Lawson Booth consulted WEAA over matters relating to being an executor for their mutual friend, the artist Frederic Shields. Lawson Booth agonised about what should happen to the palette he used, 'Yes I let that palette go. With a "pang" in my heart but I felt it too sacred to use and after me it might be lost.'[1144] He would have appreciated the floral tribute at his own funeral, shaped like a palette and bearing his own brushes.

Art Circles: Frederic Shields
Frederic Shields (1833-1911) is still regarded as a significant artist, friend of Ford Madox Brown, and closely associated with the Rossetti and William Morris circles. His designs for stained glass and mosaics, redolent of the Arts and Crafts movement, were incorporated into several chapels and greatly admired. Shields came from a grim background of poverty in Hartlepool, learnt his art at evening class and spent many of his working years in Manchester.

WEAA wrote about Shields affectionately in the *Millgate Monthly*, describing how he had known him 'forever,' adding the intriguing information that he had taken Shields onto the library roof so he could make a sketch for his painting *Factory Girls at the Old Clothes Fair, Knott Mill, Manchester*.[1145]

There is another sketch of Knott Hill Fair from the Campfield roof, dated precisely at fifteen minutes past noon on 21 April 1876. This was the Friday at the end of Easter week, and little is left to see as the fair disbanded after Easter Tuesday. The sketch is in the MCLA, described as by an unknown artist.[1146] But there is a faint initial in the corner, J. J. A. Perhaps this is WEAA's friend Joseph John Alley. The roof of the crumbling Campfield building was an attraction despite the risks and seemingly well known to WEAA's circle. Shields and J. J. A. had captured scenes that were soon to vanish from the city. In August 1876 the Council abolished as a nuisance the three traditional fairs of the Easter Knott Mill Fair, the Whitsuntide Aca's Fair, and the November Dirt Fair as it was popularly known.

WEAA describes *Factory Girls at the Old Clothes*

Fair in his article on Shields, arguing that it should be in the Manchester Art Gallery, as indeed it is now. He shared Shields' understanding of the factory girls and their love of opulence. WEAA, unlike Crestadoro and other library officials, did not voice opposition to the fairs, despite the problems they caused the library. He admitted that to many the Knott Mill Fair might be an unattractive theme, 'but in the hands of Shields, whilst it retains its verity, it is suffused by poetry, and the sympathy that penetrates beneath the outward show of things. For Knott Mill was the market of the poor ; but in the group of factory girls, and especially in the graceful figure of the lass who is weighing the capabilities and merits - and also the cost - of the robe discarded by some richer daughter of Eve, we have the human touch that binds us all in one living chain. The opulent colour and the flowing lines of the composition, falling with the ease and precision that comes from the master's hand, make it a delightful picture.'

There are eleven AP letters from Shields, dating from 1878 to 1909. Shields makes several references to his 'ancient friendship'

with WEAA, and the letters are generally prompted by requests or favours between them. Shields subscribed to the 1878 testimonial for WEAA, supported WEAA in his petition on behalf of the poet Henry Sutton's widow and daughter, obtaining 'notable' signatures, Swinburne's amongst them.[1147] He requested WEAA to review his work in the *Guardian*, cheerily gave WEAA permission to use images of his works for the *Millgate Monthly* article and was highly appreciative of the result. On another occasion he did not spare WEAA criticism for he disliked WEAA's poem on a medicant saint, 'I blame you not, old friend, if the glamour of the foolish story witched you into versifying it.' Despite condemning this, 'The world has had enough & to spare of pious lies,'[1148] a few days later Shields found WEAA's little book, presumably *An Axon Treasury*, 'full of sweets' and 'Your rendering of the St Francis story being specially tender.'[1149] Shields is well documented, but I have not tracked down his designs in a Southport church that he mentioned to WEAA, 'These are 'eight prophets and evangelists above the arches of the nave – I don't know the name of the

church.’[1150]

CHAPTER 31

257 DEANSGATE

Commuting

I was puzzled to find that during the Southport years several of WEAA's correspondents regularly posted their letters to a Manchester address, 257 Deansgate. Given that these correspondents were mainly contacting him about his paid commissions on the *Yorkshire Post* or the *Manchester City News*, or about proposed and ongoing publishing projects, matters that required a quick response, it was odd that they were not sent directly to his home in Southport. He also addressed some letters from here instead of 3 Albany Road. The inference is that WEAA regularly picked up his letters from 257 Deansgate.

As well as the mystery of the Deansgate address I was surprised that WEAA could afford the time or money to travel between Southport and Manchester on a frequent basis. In 2020 the journey is both expensive and wearingly slow.

The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Society (LYRS) gave me invaluable help in working out the time and costs WEAA would have

incurred on a journey. This was supplemented by information from the National Railway Museum, and by the contents of a little book I found, published in 1905 tabulating the privilege staff fares from Leeds to all parts of the country.[1151] As these privilege fares were roughly half the standard cost, I could estimate what WEAA would have paid.

It would have been a shorter journey then, around 52 minutes on the express service which is considerably better than one-and-a-quarter-hours or more in 2023. John Bulmer of LYRS, resident of Southport, commented, 'I can confirm that the appalling current trains and track are not what things were like in the L&Y days, when the line was a pretty important route. Indeed, the owner of my house in the early 20th C was a Wigan based Tailor, so I assume he travelled there daily.' [1152]

The vast improvements to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway under the management of John Aspinall and then H.A. Hoy ensured that Southport was an attractive commuter suburb for Liverpool and Manchester, stimulating the healthy balance of residents and visitors, 'The

L&YR were also keen to expand commuter facilities for the masses, and regular services ran into Manchester from the city's northern suburbs. Liverpool was also similarly served by an "out-of-town" workforce who saw the attraction of settling in the communities along the coast towards Southport. Not only did the L&YR make an active attempt to promote such traffic through advertising the benefits of "suburbia", they also provided the services to go with it.'[1153]

Travelling from Southport was therefore convenient and comfortable. The other factor for WEAA was cost. WEAA would have paid around 5 shillings and sixpence return if he travelled second class, four shillings and threepence third class, a steep rise from the one shilling and three pence charged in 1896. There was no first class on this route. Friends recalled WEAA deep in his books on trains. He would have found quiet for his reading even in the third class for the coaches were constructed as compartments, not open as today. [1154] Once buried in a book, WEAA was lost to the world. In 1921 an American, John Hyde, confided to Ernest, 'I am sorry never to have made your father's acquaintance. I once travelled in the same compartment with him

for an hour, but he was so deeply immersed in a book I could not bring myself to interrupt him.'[1155]

WEAA had a £150 annual pension from 1905 to 1910, earned between a guinea and a guinea and a half for his newspaper columns, and income from The Simple Life guests, each charged twenty-five shillings per week. It is very likely too WEAA had returns from investments such as the William Harrison Knitting Machine. The VS recorded dividends from the 100 paid-up £1 shares given by William Harrison: for example, £220 was added to the VS account in 1897. As regards outgoings he still had life insurance to pay out and rent for The Simple Life. Judging by the newspaper advertisements for similar houses in Southport, though most just refer coyly to a 'moderate rent,' the rent was probably around sixty pounds per year.

Putting all this together, it seems feasible that he could afford to travel to Manchester on a regular, though not daily, basis. There were plenty of friends and family to stay with overnight.

Vegetarian Headquarters

Newspaper advertisements as well as announcements in the *VM* solve the mystery of 257 Deansgate. It was indeed home from home for him, the headquarters of his beloved VS.

The VS, founded in 1847, had moved upmarket over the years. Legend had it that an early office, above the premises of the bookseller had to be entered via a ladder. This may have been Thomas Sutton's shop at Shudehill. There were offices at 12 King Street, Salford in the 1860s, then at 75 Princess Street, Manchester from around the 1870s. The VS then moved, probably in the 1890s, to 19 Oxford Street. Annual meetings and social gatherings were always held elsewhere; the Bible Christian Church Salford, the Trevelyan Temperance Hotel, the Town Hall rooms and then the Vegetarian Restaurant at 5 Fountain Street were main venues. The

Fountain Street Vegetarian Restaurant, opened in 1884, was really a club for vegetarians with lecture halls, reading rooms, billiards and even a smoking room. In the usual overlap of reform societies, the IOGT set up a lodge at the Fountain Street Restaurant: over ninety members attended the first gathering in February 1885. Nearby, there was a smaller associated restaurant, the Fountain, providing cheap meals. The 1880s witnessed the growth of the vegetarian Frederick Smallman's empire of vegetarian restaurants, shops, bakery, confectioners, and an agency for Dr Nichols's health foods, all in and around Manchester. There was a Smallman's restaurant at the Exchange Arcade.

A federation of temperance societies funded the construction of The Onward Building at 207-209 Deansgate. This magnificent building, beautifully restored by the current owners, opened in 1905 as the Onward headquarters. The Onward Publishing Office was based there. Onward had many members in the VS and proximity to Onward may well have prompted the VS to consider Deansgate for their move. The new building, stripped red and yellow, was a startling new presence on Deansgate and attracted much attention.

Early in January 1905 the VS moved its offices from 19 Oxford Street to rooms in 257 Deansgate.

257 Deansgate represented a splendid advance in the burgeoning VS fortunes, both as a building and as a location. It was close to the Manchester Free Reference Library in the Old Town Hall, the Deansgate Branch Library at Campfield, the Portico, Chetham's, and innumerable booksellers. (The Deansgate Branch Library, built adjacent to the old Campfield site, was opened in 1882 and served as the Central Lending Library until 1934. The Old Town Hall was demolished in 1912, and the Reference Library languished in wooden huts at Piccadilly until the Central Library opened in 1934.) Central, Knot Mill and Deansgate, London Road, Oxford Road, and Victoria railway stations were all nearby.

257 Deansgate still exists, currently occupied by an estate agent. It is part of a dignified four storey building, forming a long row of shops, offices, and restaurants. There was plenty of space even for the VS with its non-stop bustle of health food store, cookery classes, demonstrations, and talks as well as all the comings and goings of Albert Broadbent's publishing business.

The Vegetarian Cause
WEAA's commitment to the vegetarian cause has only been lightly touched on so far. It was, however, the core of his morality, the realisation of all his principles, a stimulus for his literary, statistical, and scholarly explorations.

The vegetarian movement in WEAA's lifetime included in its wide compass philosophical, radical, and social motivations. It was a complex amorphous movement across different classes of society. The ranks of English vegetarians throughout the nineteenth century were predominantly, but not exclusively, inclined to temperance, to regimes that excluded meat but not necessarily dairy or eggs, or even fish though this caused major disputes. In the north of England, most of the early members were from radical, non-conformist, and working-class backgrounds. In London it was the middle classes, particularly the lower middle class, who were drawn into the movement, causing splits with the north and the creation of further societies. In both north and south the impetus came from the cities, not from the countryside. Urban dwellers were becoming conscious of the suffering of animals, were perturbed at their abuse for food and sport, views which had little rural resonance.

Spiritual principles, health, self-help, education, safe food, and the elimination of poverty were all drivers as well as the conviction that a vegetarian diet might eliminate the war mongering aggression of meat eaters. The choleric red-faced John Bull figure, fed on beef and beer and proudly flourishing the Union Jack on his paunch, was diametrically opposite to the image that gradually emerged of the sandalled, dress reformed, gentle pacifist.

Pinning down such a hydra headed movement is fraught with difficulty, but the ups and downs of the British movement can be mapped through the journal of the VS, usually referred to as the *VM* though the title did vary over the decades.

WEAA experienced the evolving stages of the

vegetarian movement from the decline in the 1860s to the revival in the 1880s. The VS was refreshingly internationalist in character though the different theories about 'primitive races' in the pages of the *VM* can be repellent, some seeing their 'savagery' linked to meat eating. Members explored the classical, oriental, and Indian origins of vegetarianism. The VS connected to organisations abroad, especially with Germany and Scandinavia. Even in WW1 the VS preserved good relations with German colleagues, faithful to the shared vision of a peaceful, co-operative humanity, saved from the corruption of killing and consuming animals.

All this was fertile ground for WEAA. The VS provided him with comradeship, lasting friendships, travel to the USA, and an appreciative audience for his talks, articles, pamphlets, and poems. As with other organisations in his life, the overlaps of interests reinforced his networking. There were links between the VS and his other allegiances, the IOGT, United Kingdom Alliance and Anti-Tobacco League, but it was the warm, welcoming circles of VS that really drew WEAA and his family in.

The vegetarian cause gave WEAA further entry to academic and intellectual circles, to the fringes of the Tolstoy communities, to the linked causes of the Humanitarian League and the Anti-Vivisectionist movement. Respected as he was in library, literary and bibliographic circles, it was really the VS that enabled him to consolidate his interests. Fellow VS members were highly appreciative of WEAA. There are several articles and mentions of him in the VS journals and other vegetarian publications that give personal details not found elsewhere. WEAA was unusually open in

exploring what drew him to the movement. For the sake of the cause, he was prepared to share personal feelings.

In *Vegetarianism and Intellectual Life*, delivered as a Manchester Vegetarian Lecture in 1889, WEAA described vividly the stresses of a professional author's life, 'A large amount of literary work has to be done under necessarily depressing and unhealthy conditions. The drain upon the vital powers involved in strenuous and often prolonged intellectual labour at uncertain intervals and at untimely hours is not conducive to health. Night-work especially may be regarded as detrimental.'[1156]

There is more on these lines, and it is startling to hear some *New Grub Street* reality from the usually determinedly cheerful WEAA. Again, in an address he delivered at Lake Goguac, Michigan, on the 1893 tour, entitled *Tendencies of Vegetarianism*, he admitted, 'My own life-work has been that of literature, and if the principles of Vegetarian dietics had been untrustworthy I must have broken down under the strain of an arduous and hardworking life of intellectual assertion.'[1157]
Vegetarians were per se outsiders, ridiculed as cranks and disliked for their obsessional focus.

Many tried to explain their motivations, to preach the benefits of their system. Open minded and mild, WEAA never forced his extreme views on others, as several friends remarked. Charles Sutton summed it up, 'Thus he laboured for peace, temperance, food reform, vegetarianism and humanitarianism in its widest sense. Yet no one who knew him regarded him as a faddist; all loved him for his gentleness and tolerance, and for his good humour.'[1158] WEAA once joked to a VS gathering 'that he did not know how he should feel if he came by a strange accident to belong to a majority'.[1159]

Why WEAA was a Vegetarian

Vegetarians were old hands at explaining their 'faddism', both as a response to ridicule and as a means of promulgating their ideas. WEAA's views can be garnered from the many features he wrote over the years in the vegetarian journals, ranging from statistical analysis of food production, investigations into disease, provision of cheap food for children, transport of sheep and cattle to the inspiring examples of saints and literary figures. Then in 1907 he responded to a request from the editor *of Reynolds Newspaper* to give a personal account.

‘Why I am a Vegetarian’, reprinted in the *VM*. [1160]

WEAA encapsulated all the aspects of his vegetarianism in this three-page article, including mentions of his treasured icons, Pythagoras, and Shelley. But one theme strongly emerges. There is absolutely no doubt that his driving force was his recoil from the cruelty and suffering of animals that is inherent in meat eating.

On 10 May 1910, WEAA read his paper *The Poets as Protectors of Animals* to the VS meeting at Leicester, denouncing vivisection as well as the cruelties of sport. His account of the sadistic torture inflicted on dogs by a Dr Brachet is so horrific I have had to force myself to reread the paper.[1161] WEAA forcefully imagined their betrayal and agony. His intense sensitivity to the horror of animal slaughter is the base of his vegetarianism. This is the boy who loved *Little Derwent’s Breakfast*, not a vegetarian tract but very much slanted towards the simple appeal of fruit and vegetables. This is the WEAA who wrote, ‘There is more joy in eating an apple than in eating beefsteak, for the fruit reminds one of the orchard and not of the slaughter-house.’

Dr Brachet’s experiment must have haunted WEAA. In 1912 under his pseudonym Goldpen, he wrote a dramatic sketch, *About a Dog*, based on the conflict between a couple

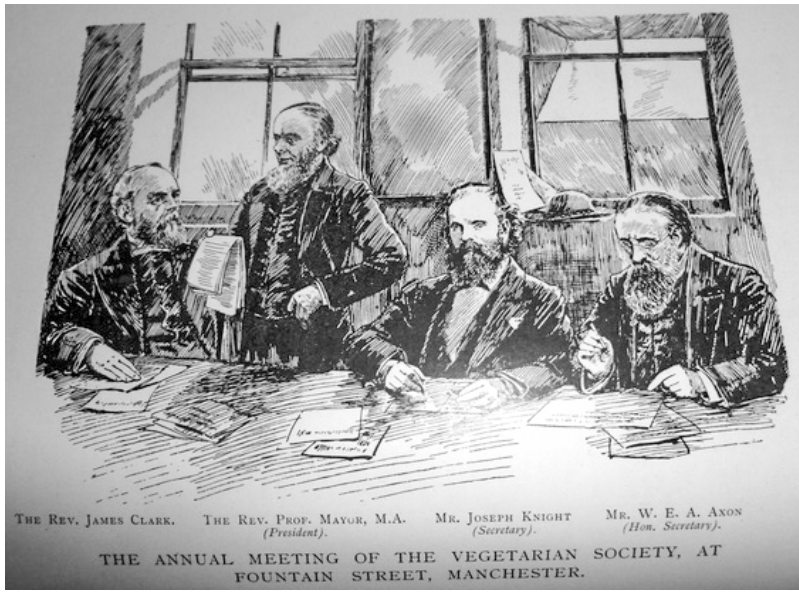
admiring the faithful love of Odysseus' the old hound Argos, and the horror inflicted by a third character on a dog in the name of science, 'quite a different story from that of Homer.'[1162] WEAA's 'Goldpen' generally is associated with his writing for children: this is too horrific for that audience. Perhaps it was performed for an Anti-Vivisection Society event.

WEAA could not be more definite on his epiphany:

> 'Have I the right to torture and kill animals for food, if health and strength and the enjoyment of life can be obtained without torture, without cruelty, and without the slaughter of living creatures who can feel and suffer? That is the question which some forty years ago I put to my conscience. Conscience answered "No" and I became a vegetarian. I have never regretted the step I then took. It caused some temporary inconveniences, but these were greatly outweighed by solid advantages.'

WEAA's horror is understandable, and his vegetarian comrades shared the same revulsion. Slaughterhouses, brutal transportation, contaminated meat from foul butcher shops were repulsively evident, much more so than today. As conditions were improved or hidden away, the vegetarian emphasis switched to individual health benefits, now evolving rapidly into concerns over climate change.

Rising Through the Ranks



THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE VEGETARIAN SOCIETY, AT FOUNTAIN STREET, MANCHESTER.

Perhaps prompted by William Lloyd Garrison's attendance at the twentieth annual VS meeting in 1867, WEAA joined the VS on 27 September 1868 and according to the family record immediately became treasurer. He was first noted in *VM* as present at a business meeting in January 1869. The VS was very much a Manchester based organisation with its roots in the Bible Christian Church Salford, its headquarters, and enterprises in Manchester city centre. Many of the members were familiar to WEAA from other contexts. This is an unusually informal sketch of the VS Council in 1894, the members being the Rev. James Clark, Professor Mayor, Joseph Knight

and WEAA as Honorary Secretary.[1163]
The *VM* chronicled WEAA's progress. He was a member of the Executive Committee in 1871, and a regular attendee, usually with Jane and later with Setta, at soirees and social events, his activities being reported with increasing detail, a barometer of his importance. He gave his maiden speech at a Conversazione at the Mechanics Institute on 17 May in 1873. His encouraging view of how advances meant less dependence on animal products, making the time right for the vegetarian movement, was fully reported in the journal. Conversaziones were a new enterprise for the VS, and WEAA actively initiated and organised these social gatherings. Short talks and addresses helping to spread the word and WEAA often gave the welcoming speech. He championed the Fountain Street Vegetarian restaurant, raised motions at the conferences, regularly lectured, covered for other speakers, chaired meetings, conferences, and public assemblies, rarely missing an annual meeting or a summer school once these were started by Albert Broadbent towards the end of the century. He resigned as Treasurer in 1882, becoming Hon. Secretary in 1884. WEAA was one of the founders of the

Manchester and Salford Vegetarian Society in 1883 and its president a year later.

Kitty's death with all her promise had been a huge blow to the VS but Ernest and then his son Geoffrey followed in WEAA's footsteps as they did in the library ones. Both became officials and both, like WEAA, did their stints as editors of the *VM*.

In Southport WEAA became President of the local Food Reform Society. There was a strong vegetarian presence in Southport, perhaps initiated by Mathilde Hompes who was a resident there for a time. As already described, WEAA was a delegate for the VS at Chicago in 1893 and again represented them at St Louis in 1904. By 1904 Setta was recorded as a member of the Executive Committee with Ernest, now the Hon. Librarian, as Chairman. WEAA was Hon. Secretary. On the death of Professor Mayor in 1910 WEAA became President of the VS with his old friend Miss Mathilde Hompes replacing him as Hon. Secretary.

Miss Mathilde Hompes: Hon. Sec. *VS*, 1911

The Vegetarian Community of Print

The *VM* hosted many of WEAA's articles,

poems, and translations over the years, the first being an article in 1869 on the Manchester printer George Nicholson, the last, a Summer School poem, on 30 August 1913.

The George Nicholson article is worth studying. In this early piece WEAA indulged himself in flourishes and long reflections of a sort that soon would be knocked out of his writing. Whilst recording Nicholson's compassion for animals, his total rejection of meat eating, and his role as a precursor of the VS, WEAA also explored a favourite theme of cheap and handy publications, as exemplified by Nicholson's periodical, *The Literary Miscellany*. Nicholson may have been a poor, long forgotten printer but WEAA raises him to a heroic level, 'And the humble Manchester printer, of whom we have spoken, did good service in his day-assisted bravely in the good fight against vice and ignorance. Unknown to-day, he yet commenced a mighty movement, a movement which has spread over the whole of Europe, and the mighty Continent of America. He was the father of cheap literature, and the generation which reads shilling Shakesperes and penny Bunyans should have a word of thankfulness for George Nicholson.'[1164]

Never one to waste copy, WEAA wrote about George Nicolson again for an entry in his *Guardian LNQ* and then had this reprinted in the *VM* in February 1877. His style had become much more succinct – with none of the flourishes C P Scott detested. He used the end of the original article for a neatly direct start to the *LNQ* piece.

With the emergence of the London groups came the *Vegetarian News* and the *Dietic Reformer*. There was also *The Seed*, and coverage of vegetarian topics in sympathetic journals like the *Co-operative News*, the *Millgate Monthly* and the *Humane Review*. WEAA wrote for them all.

The range and depth of WEAA's writing frequently astounded his readers. His virtuoso performances were vividly demonstrated in the microcosm of the *VM*. Here there are some of WEAA's meticulous factual pieces, often underlined by statistical analysis and tables, on such topics as the cost of food supply, the transmission of diseases from animal products, the transportation of live animals, land ownership, vegetarianism and the national economy, population, and provision of meals

for school children. WEAA's statistical pamphlets, particularly his greatly admired *Corn or Cattle*, were frequently updated and republished.[1165] *Corn or Cattle* was read to the British Association in 1881, published in the *VM*, printed as a VS pamphlet, and went into several editions.

The range of scholarly and literary articles is equally stunning. WEAA wrote, for example, on Cowper, Edward Fitzgerald, Goldsmith, Milton, Shelley, Tolstoy, humanist poets, Arabian, Chinese and Indian vegetarian traditions, the Bible Christian Church, General Timothy Ruggles, Joseph Brotherton, early Christian bishops, saints, Swedenborg, Plutarch, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Alcott House Commune.

His article on Edward Fitzgerald is outstanding. Who but WEAA would spot how Fitzgerald's vegetarianism changed the 'grotesqueness of the original' line, 'A gourd of wine and a thigh-bone of mutton' into the famous 'A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread, and Thou'? (Oswald Birstall followed this too when he sent WEAA his rendering of the verse into Lancashire dialect, 'Herewith a loaf o'bread, beneath a tree.')[1166]

WEAA analyses Fitzgerald's purely selfish and unethical motives for adapting a vegetarian regime, and in a brilliant line neatly disposes of his notorious relationship with a fisherman,

‘Fitzgerald had a talent, perhaps a genius, for friendship, which in the case of the fisherman, Posh, was pushed beyond the limits of wisdom.’[1167]

WEAA continued his role as chronicler of his contemporaries, producing significant memorials of vegetarian comrades. Amongst them were obituaries representing his personal losses of Dr F J Furnivall, Professor Mayor, Professor Newman, Isaac Pitman, and saddest of all for WEAA, his beloved friend, younger than himself, Albert Broadbent who died in 1912.

WEAA can never be pinned down as a member of a particular church, although the Unitarians did lay claim to him, but the Bible Christian Church featured regularly throughout his life. With its Swedenborgian roots and Joseph Brotherton, pioneer of Free Libraries, as its second minister, it had to be special to WEAA. Without WEAA, its first chronicler, much of the history of the Bible Christian Church and its link with the founding of the VS would have been lost.[1168] Modern researchers are refocusing on the Bible Christian Church, and all derive knowledge directly or indirectly from WEAA’s centenary book, *A History of the Bible Christian Church Salford from 1809 to 1909*. Derek Antrobus has written a major new history of the Bible Christian Church and how ‘a tiny dissenting sect in Salford’ came to play

such a central role in the vegetarian movement. He gives good coverage to WEAA.[1169] Another bonus, given there are few examples of WEAA's talks, is that WEAA included in the *History of the Bible Christian Church* the talk he gave on the death of the Rev. James Clark in 1905. It was an emotional farewell to a friend of more than half his life, 'Not only in smoky Lancashire have I been privileged by his companionship, but on the broad Atlantic, in the City of Brotherly Love, in the crowded streets of Chicago, the heats and languors of St. Louis.'

London vegetarians, feeling badly neglected as regards the VS, set up their own society. Charles W Forward, author of *Our Organisations* in their London journal *The Vegetarian Review* complained that the Bible Christian Church had kept the movement in Manchester, 'Still, if I had a voice in the matter, I would have removed the whole show to London, or, at least, established a branch of the Vegetarian Church somewhere in the Metropolis.'[1170]

Some Typical Representatives of Vegetarians
Actively Engaged in Propaganda Work
F. Edmund Baillie (Chester)
W. E. A. Axon (Manchester)
J. Scott Lidgett (Cambridge)
J. Haughton Moore (Dublin)
J. S. Heron (Belfast)
Von Seefeld (Hanover)
A. F. Hills (London)
Dr. Paul Forster (Berlin)
J. F. Priestley (Exeter)
Miss May Yates (London)
Josiah Oldfield (London)
Mrs Hawkins (London)

Vegetarian Movement Pioneers: from *The Vegetarian*, 1891

Meals

There were many attempts to provide dinners for the poor. WEAA was often involved in these, and is credited with naming one

enterprise, Robin dinners, intended to give cheap and warming meals over the winter to thousands of children, 'ragged Robins' in towns and cities. Nearly five hundred children were fed at one Robin dinner in Manchester in 1880 and the next year was even more successful. The Manchester and Salford Vegetarian Society provided a penny supper for 130 people at the Congregational Schoolroom, Ancoats. The idea was not just to feed people but to give 'a practical lesson in economy.'[1171] WEAA and others gave addresses after the supper of soup and pudding. Kitty organised the Whit-Monday dinners given by the Manchester and Salford Vegetarian Society to newsboys and shoeblacks. The lentil soup, puddings and oranges were received with cheers.[1172] Such initiatives linked to another of WEAA's concerns, the best diet for children living in poverty. WEAA was convinced he could help children through food reform. *The Provision of Cheap Meals for School Children* was given as a Manchester Vegetarian Lecture.[1173] Well researched and far ranging, it aroused great interest amongst administrators. Two years later WEAA participated in a joint conference

held on this topic, the proceedings being ‘appropriately printed at the Royal Manchester Jubilee Exhibition,’ as WEAA outlined in the Prefatory Note.[1174]

For many the appeal of a vegetarian diet was its favourable impact on very limited budgets. As mentioned previously, the hero of Mrs Ward’s novel, the *History of David Grieve*, survives through frequenting cheap vegetarian restaurants. In the 1840s the only provision that existed in eating houses was the ‘vegetable ordinary’ a vegetarian course included with main meals. WEAA promoted the cause of vegetarian restaurants, shrewdly taking out shares in the enterprises. By 1883 there were at least six vegetarian restaurants established in Manchester city centre, an indicator of increasing acceptance of food reform.

Fun and Games

This is the merest sketch of the ceaseless contributions WEAA made to the VS. As well as his energetic participation in the early days, his most active period was perhaps in the last years of the century when there was renewed interest in vegetarianism. The VS, under the controversial reign of Francis Newman, as its President, had extended membership to non-vegetarians. There was a shift away from its radical, nonconformist roots to a more middle-class health and food reform regime. Membership rose as the movement became more mainstream.

Despite his shyness WEAA was noted as a ‘clubbable man,’[1175] and from the start he thrived in the companionship of the VS, emerging not only as a useful committee man but as a cherished presence at gatherings, a friend to many with a finger in every vegetarian pie.

Jane and the friends who gathered at their first home were equally enthusiastic vegetarians. Family involvement continued and Jane was often recorded as present at various social events. The Haden Guests were there too. In 1873 Haden Guest and WEAA were both on the Committee, and social tea-meetings were enhanced by Mrs Haden Guest presiding at the piano. The VS seemed to have been jollier affairs for women than the gatherings of IOGT where it was once recorded the ‘not the least pleasing feature being the presence of a number of young women, who busily and silently occupied themselves with knitting or sewing.’[1176]

WEAA's sprightly and humorous side flourished in the VS, introducing the serious topics of his talks with light touches, and enjoying the fun and games that characterised the less pretentious Victorian social gatherings. At a Hulme meeting, for example, J S R Phillips, who later lapsed as a vegetarian, amused the company with a rendition of the old satirical song, *The Vicar of Bray*. Dr Ernst from Venezuela, James Spence's friend, was there as a guest and may have wondered what was going on. On another occasion 'Mr. Axon threatens to send in a small cartload of curiosities, prints, books, artistic and other objects of interest.'[1177]

The VS was proud of WEAA's scholarly reputation, noting his successes in their journals and reviewing his books. Members

were impressed when WEAA became a fellow of RSL in 1868, only two or three months after he joined the VS. There was also relief that unlike the 'dry as dust' scholars, WEAA's talks were pitched at a general rather than erudite audience. It was remarked that he 'disported himself in oratory.'[1178]. WEAA's well received talk on *Book Rarities of the Manchester Free Library* was reported in the journal with the telling comment, 'This most valuable address has much more general interest than its title would lead one to suppose.'[1179]

By his own account, WEAA had once hoped to add to his literary earnings by lecturing and although he did receive some payments he gave his time freely to many causes, only asking for expenses. It is understandable that he was popular as a lecturer for as well as his light touch, he had a notably rich voice. His moral stance enabled him to deliver secular sermons on such themes as duty. He gave talks at the Bible Christian Church and other churches. When the Unitarian Rev. William Bennett was too ill to preach, he called upon WEAA to cover for him. On the Chicago trip, WEAA delivered addresses, *Vegetarianism and Peace*, at the Temple Church, Philadelphia,

Tendencies of Vegetarianism at Lake Goguac, Michigan as well as the Congress paper itself, *The Literature of Vegetarianism*. All were published in the *VM*.[1180]

WEAA did not have sufficient time to deliver *Vegetarianism in the Early Christian Church* at Wilberforce University as planned on the Chicago trip. William Scarborough, no vegetarian himself, heroically stepped in to read out his dear friend's paper.[1181] This paper aroused such debate that it was printed afterwards with five pages of commentaries by eminent scholars. They challenged his views, disputed his conclusions, but treated his research and the issue he had raised with respect.

William Canning remembered how he had been affected by WEAA's voice at the 1905 Vegetarian Summer School at Melrose, on 'a never-to-be-forgotten evening.' WEAA gave a reading of Shelley's *To a Skylark* and the audience was stunned by 'a charm and manner hitherto unsuspected by his friends.' Canning treasured the picture, 'During the reading of that wonderful song of gladness, our friend stood looking towards the ruins of Melrose

Abbey, his beautiful voice floating over the peaceful scene, leaving to me a sweet and refreshing memory.'[1182]

Testimonial

Joseph Knight, who served as VS Secretary when WEAA was the Hon. Secretary, wrote an invaluable account of the first forty years of the VS, capturing details that would otherwise have been lost. He pauses in his chronicle to give a special mention to WEAA:

> 'Even in the period least prolific in the accession of adherents we find amongst the new members who registered the names of R.R. Walker, Francis Wm. Newman and Wm. E. A. Axon, the first-named afterwards becoming Secretary, the second President and the third Treasurer, and of a later period, Honorary Secretary, which position he still retains. I would like to say here that ever since his connection Mr. Axon has been one of its most indefatigable workers. His services to the cause, both by voice and pen, have justly earned for him the high esteem and appreciation of his fellow workers. As a slight token of this regard a testimonial was presented to Mr Axon at a meeting held on Wednesday 9th May, 1888, accompanied by warm words in grateful recognition of his worth ; words which, I

> know, but inadequately express the feelings of those who are aware how more than fully they are deserved. But to return.'[1183]

Joseph Knight regretted that he did not have sufficient time to explore the part these three members had played in the rising fortunes of the VS. *The Vegetarian Review* recorded that WEAA's testimonial 'consisted of a handsome mahogany stationery cabinet, and a purse containing the amount of £70 5s.'[1184]

Fellow Vegetarians

Vegetarian reformers frequently met with outrage, particularly when their vision for an improved humanity included pacifism, temperance, and worst of all socialism. However diverse the movement, however conflicted internally, this ridicule and hostility encouraged comradeship amongst vegetarians.

WEAA had many VS friends from familiar Lancashire working and middle- class backgrounds, amongst them Edmund J Baillie, the fruit grower of Liverpool, Alfred Broadbent, paid secretary and publisher, the Rev James Clark of the Bible Christian Church, and William Harrison of the knitting machine fame. All these were dear to WEAA. Bailies's twenty-four letters to him, from 1884 to 1904, are as refreshing as his articles on orchards in the *VM*, and his gifts of flowers and fruit,

delivered by train, were precious.

The national and international network of the VS and allied groups brought WEAA comrades from further afield. Particularly loyal were the photographer Henry Godbold of St Leonards and his family, giving the Axons practical support in the dark days of Jane's and then Kitty's deaths. The Rev. Henry S Clubb (1827-1922), founder and first President of the American Vegetarian Society, was a dashing and romantic figure. Born in Colchester to Swedenborgian parents, he was a chartist, abolitionist, shorthand teacher, pioneer of utopian vegetarian colonies in both England and the USA, migrating there in 1853, quartermaster in the Union Army, journalist, senator, and minister of the Bible Christian Church in Philadelphia. Clubb promoted the International Congress for Vegetarians at the Chicago World Fair where of course he and WEAA joined forces. They corresponded and met again in 1901 when Clubb visited Salford.

Like many VS members WEAA rejoiced at the charismatic presence of Dr Anna Kingsford as Vice-President. The VS members were immensely proud when their protegee trained as a medical doctor in Paris. WEAA seconded the motion of congratulations in 1875 on her progress and applauded her unshakeable stance against vivisection. She qualified in 1880.

Some alliances he made were political or humanitarian, not necessarily strictly vegetarian. George Holyoake, a name that still has resonance was an outstanding reformer, secularist, and public figure but whilst understanding vegetarians did not see secularism (the term he invented) as concerned with dietary matters. At some stage WEAA came into his ken and they became friends. There are twenty-four AP letters, running from 1874 to 1905 and two more letters exist in the Co-operative Society Archives in Holyoake House. In the one dated 19 August 1882 WEAA alerted his American contacts to ensure welcome for Holyoake's visit to the USA, and in the other discussed the history of the Anti-Corn Law League as well as arranging to call in for a few minutes chat. The tone of this correspondence is warm and empathetic.

Three Unusual Classical Scholars

The vegetarian movement brought some flamboyant characters into

WEAA's Lancashire life. Three were renowned classical scholars who proved beneficial in bringing him into wider academic circles. Professor Francis H Newman, Professor E B Mayor and Henry Salt were eminent and controversial in their day, though now largely forgotten. Their backgrounds and education were very different to WEAA's.
Newman was President of the VS from 1873 to 1884, succeeded by Mayor to his death in 1910, and then by WEAA.

Henry Shakespear Stephens Salt (1851-1939)

Henry Salt was the product of the Indian army and Eton, where incidentally he received a welcoming letter from a recent pupil, Derwent Moultrie Coleridge of *Little Derwent's Breakfast* fame. Salt then went to Kings College, Cambridge. Founder of the Humanitarian League, member of the Fabian Society, he was regarded as a traitor to his class and country. He rejected animals being used for food or sport as well as questioning the fundamental beliefs of his class that the poor were a different species, that workers were idle, criminals should be brutally punished and that without Eton, Oxbridge, and the aristocracy, all would be chaos.

The AP correspondence with WEAA is listed as a resource in Salt's *DNB* entry. The letters form an intriguing record of Salt's thoughts and activities. From the WEAA perspective what is distinctive is the encouragement Salt

gave him, praising his articles and speeches, inviting him to be a delegate at the Peace Congress in Manchester, discussing Tolstoy, welcoming him as a member of the Humanitarian League in 1897, and sharing his enthusiasms for Shelley and De Quincey. Like WEAA, Salt was a naturalist and ornithologist, but this emerged later in his life and there are no mentions in the letters. The twenty-nine letters running from 1886 to 1914, the last being sent to Ernest, resound with Salt's idiosyncratic phrases.

When WEAA was seeking paid work after the *Guardian* debacle, Salt was glad to take his articles for the *Humanitarian Review*, paying when he could. He was appreciative of their merit, especially the one WEAA wrote on J Newton and regretted he had not been able to pay. Salt included WEAA's translation of a Greek poem in his anthology *Kith and KIn*. This was a great tribute for Salt disparaged most humane poems about animals as "of a very third-rate order.'[1185]

Salt prepared his own cremation address and in it declared his disbelief in established religion and his own faith in a 'Creed of

Kinship.'[1186] Like WEAA, he was drawn to an open faith in the eventual brotherhood of men, nations, and animals, an end to barbarity, war, inequality, and poverty.

Professor Eyton Bickersteth Mayor (1825-1910)
Salt could not resist the occasional dig at another of WEAA's comrades, the equally flamboyant Professor Mayor.

Mayor was the longest serving Professor of Latin at Cambridge. For three turbulent years he was additionally the University Librarian, reorganising the institution on a grand scale. The only biography of Mayor is by a modern Cambridge classics professor, John Henderson. Little can be learnt from this for Henderson makes Mayor a target of rather spiteful academic wit. Mayor's fervent vegetarianism and temperance arouses Henderson's repugnance. Like an outraged contemporary he rages against the VS's celebrations of their President's eightieth birthday, 'Then he need look no madder than those to left and right, their formality and preciosity, their self-importance and histrionics, prejudice and complacency, no less importunate and trying than any flood of verbal diarrhoea from him.'[1187]

As might be expected WEAA's view of that

occasion was very different. He revered Mayor for his scholarship, linguistic skills and commented that 'the beautiful simplicity of his character brought him golden opinions from all sorts and conditions of men.'[1188] He enjoyed Mayor's fearless and controversial spirit, 'There are not many dons who have preached in a Nonconformist chapel wearing a Good Templar's "regalia"'.

There are over a hundred letters in AP from Mayor, dating from 1880 to 1910, and they form a rich record of scholarship, librarianship, vegetarian debates, academic feuds, and warm friendship. Mayor refers in his letters to the even more controversial figures of the vegetarian movement, Henry Salt, George Bernard Shaw, and Edward Carpenter. Mayor discourses at length on his own research but never failed to appreciate WEAA, praising his verses, articles, and his editing of Bailey's *Fuller's Sermons*.

Unlike many of his Oxbridge contemporaries Mayor admired those whose learning had been wrested from hard circumstance, writing in respect of the Fuller dedication 'I ought to have thanked you at once for the generous

way in which you speak of me. I look on it as a great honour to have my name associated with that of J E Bailey, whose life-work – under such difficulties – always puts me to shame when I think of it. If only we could inspire one in ten of our students with the thirst for learning which consumes men like Arber and others, self-taught and fighting their way to learning over a Hill of Difficulty which has been tunnelled for the inmates of our college.'[1189] WEAA must have welcomed the great Professor's assessment that 'Your paper on "V" is a model of honest research. I have put it into our college library.'[1190] Mayor had no problem with the north either, regarding Manchester as the 'Mecca of Vegetarians.'[1191] Mayor was a fond family friend, staying with the Axons on his trips north. He shared their tragedies and their happiness, being stricken by Kitty's death and cheered by WEAA's marriage to Setta.

WEAA celebrated Mayor, 'In a friendship which it has been my privilege to enjoy for more than a generation I always found him a delightful host, and a delightful guest, frank, sincere, and always eagerly willing to impart the fruits of his vast learning. As a

conversationalist he had great resources, but never dreamt of monopoly. His own firm principles left room for the freedom of the divergent views of others.'[1192]

WEAA's friends said much the same about him. They would have smiled too at WEAA's slight criticism that Mayor's sermons showed a defect of 'an excess of quotation,' [1193] a fault that certainly could be levelled against WEAA.

Francis William Newman (1805-1897)

The third classical scholar was Francis Newman. His brother was John Henry Newman, leader of the Oxford Movement, Catholic Cardinal, and since 2019 an actual saint. Francis was as deeply passionate religious thinker as his brother but took wholly different directions. As a radical evangelical he gave up his Balliol Fellowship. Travelling as a missionary in the east he studied Arabic, discussed faith with Muslims, and returned with even more unorthodox views. Eventually he broke fully with traditional Christianity and like Salt developed his own personal faith, 'each worshipper sees by a light within him and is directly dependant on God.'[1194]

His first contact with the VS was unusually through concerns for his health as he suffered from dyspepsia and was addicted to 'dining pills.'[1195] His crusades for social reform, women's rights, vegetarianism, temperance, simplified spelling, and shorthand put him right in WEAA's camp: he was also anti-tobacco and anti-vivisection. Like WEAA in his final years he was closer to the Unitarians than anyone else. Newman was innovative too in teaching classical languages, trying for a modern context by using his own translations of *Hiawatha* and *Robinson Crusoe*. His students did not appreciate this. Matthew Arnold detested his translation of *The Iliad* where Newman had used a ballad form to appeal to working men, making the most of Homer's direct style and his 'love of strong and racy words.'[1196] All this would have made him sympathetic to WEAA. To the young Marian Evans (George Eliot) he was 'our blessed St Francis.' [1197]A very different sainthood to his brother's.

Considering his status and age, it is surprising to discover in Newman's letters how deeply he entrusted WEAA with confidences, seeking his advice even on personal matters. The thirty-three letters running from 1872 to 1896, are full of Newman's opinions on the discussions and disputes within the VS and the Good Templars. Newman perhaps tends to over-thinking but most of his

explorations in these letters provide an intellectual delight. Forthright and controversial he must have startled WEAA sometimes by unexpected denunciations.

In 1888 WEAA read a paper to the MLC, *On General Gordon's Copy of Newman's Dream of Gerontius*. Francis Newman, expert Arabian traveller, shared none of WEAA's reverence for his brother's work. He remembered being chided by his brother for claiming the poem originated from his suggestion, and he could not get through it anyway as it was 'too morbid.'[1198]

Newman's contempt for the adored Victorian hero Gordon has a very modern ring, 'I think him in religion an evil fanatic, in morals largely unscrupulous and always with a keen eye to money, ill gained or well gained.'[1199] In his letter to WEAA Newman denounced Gordon's cruel actions against the Arabs and his plan to starve them after the war by stopping up wells. This extraordinary letter deserves to be better known. Newman's response must have made WEAA flinch. It is also odd to find WEAA, pacifist and humanist as he was, unquestioningly praising Chinese Gordon and 'his wonderful career.'[1200] But WEAA was ever enthralled by a book and this

item, given to Manchester Free Libraries, was steeped in historic and literary associations. Newman dismissed it all, ‘I am surprised that so much is made of General Gordon’s few pencil marks made on this poem.’

Another glimpse of WEAA is given by Newman’s reaction to his account of some dispute amongst the Good Templars. WEAA, unlike another of Newman’s friends reporting the event, expressed his anger against the bigots and the narrow minded.

Newman respected WEAA as a writer, scholar, and reformer, asking for his advice in publishing his own controversial papers. He wondered whether WEAA’s ‘library society’ might publish some of his lines of the *Aeneid*, with ‘marks for foreigners and learners’ but no change of spelling.[1201] Like WEAA, Newman was attracted to ideas of spelling reform. Presumably Newman was considering something on the lines of his *Iliad* translation back in 1856.

As early as 1872 Newman had confided in WEAA that his wife was not fully a vegetarian, declining WEAA’s offer of hospitality on those grounds. Later in 1889 Newman described to WEAA his fears of dependency on his wife. The letter being marked as ‘Confidential and Secret’ is lucky to have escaped Ernest’s

censorship. Newman's dilemma was not unusual amongst vegetarians as men were uncomfortably reliant on their wives for whatever was served up on the table. Many women, especially feminists, were involved in the vegetarian movement but they were heavily outnumbered by men, a ratio of four to one in the 1880s, 'and many vegetarians bemoaned the reluctance of women to adopt the diet, seeing this as a serious obstacle to their advance.'[1202]

Newman feared that his wife being nineteen years his junior would end up as his caretaker and would be even more determined to impose the occasional slice of chicken or piece of sole. He describes her as 'the opposite of yielding, though her affections are very strong.' She rarely ate meat but was not a pure vegetarian like her husband and fretted about his health. In an underlined sentence Newman confessed, 'I cannot tell any of this out to our Vegetarians. This is my difficulty.' He was wondering whether he should change his status in the VS to Associate.

There had been much debate over the years on how purist vegetarians should be and whether the lesser position of Associate should be allowed at all for those who lapsed. It is frustrating that WEAA's reply is lost but as Newman became President in 1873, he must have dissuaded him from dropping down to Associate. WEAA was fortunate in never having experienced this difficulty with either Jane or Setta.

CHAPTER 32

A SHADOW HAD DESCENDED UPON HIM

Dorothy

Like Sophie and Kitty before her, Dorothy helped WEAA in his work. Her school-girl anecdotes inspired the columns WEAA wrote as Goldpen in the *Co-operative News*.

Goldpen

'Goldpen' wrote around three features entitled *The Cosy Corner* in the *Co-operative News*. The ones I have traced appear in 1909.

The Cosy Corner presents stories and information through the easy medium of conversation, a good approach for capturing the attention of older children. Looking at them more closely, it is a revelation to realise WEAA is presenting his own personas with their different styles and opinions. The Antiquarian, The Poet, The Philosopher, and The Phonographer gather in their accustomed spot of the Cosy Corner, joined by The High School Girl and a young man who might be her admirer, The Young Chemist. The conversations are delightful. There is also The

Doctor: WEAA was surely returning to the comradeship that he had treasured through the years. Is this the same Doctor of the *Black Knight of Ashton* and the *Round of the Clock* expeditions? The High School Girl with her intelligent remarks must be the fifteen- year-old Dorothy.

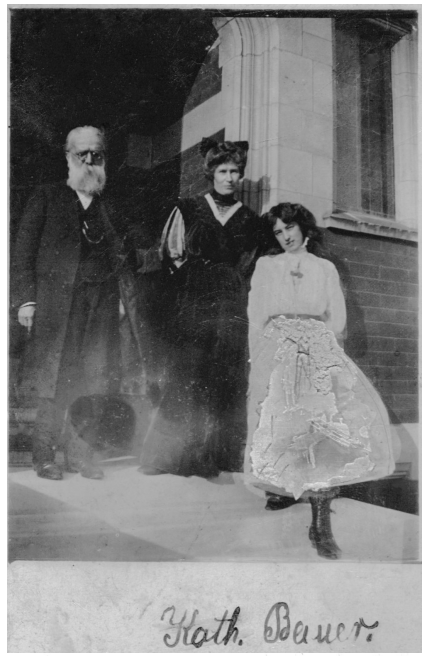
There is an intriguing mention of 'The Good Ladies of Ford' who have sent summer flowers and postcards from their holiday on the Riveria. The Poet composes a dainty verse of thanks,

'This fragrance born of sunny climes
Call up bright visions of a land
Of world-famed cities, hills and stream
Of Dante's voice and Raphael's hand-'[1203]

This may well be a tribute to the Misses Gaskell. WEAA was amongst those who received postcards from the two intrepid sisters as they explored mountains, coasts, and continental towns. WEAA and the Misses Gaskell delighted in flowers, exchanging them as occasional gifts.

The Cosy Corner sketches, light as they are, are full of the pleasure WEAA took in the conversations and varied characters around him. The youthful spirit is still there.

Setta



This is a postcard that bears a long history, surviving two world wars. The German aunties corresponded with Dorothy and her daughter Barbara until they died in the 1970s.They returned Dorothy's 1909 postcard with this letter in 1969.

Dorothy sent the postcard in 1909, worried about her mother who was staying with relatives in Germany. Usually Dorothy accompanied her abroad, and WEAA went too when time or commitments allowed. There are several references in the AP letters

to these trips. Setta's health was deteriorating, and she may have become too ill on this holiday to write home. The German aunties returned the postcard to Veronica Boys, Dorothy's granddaughter, in the 1970s. Kath Bauer, one of the aunties, attached a note to the postcard, explaining the signature under the photograph, 'I was a silly child to write my name on this photo. By 1909 I never could know I would send it back after 60 years and more!'.

The remarkable Setta had saved the family through The Simple Life enterprise but at some personal cost. Happy as they were, their time was now constrained, as Mathilde Hompes commented, 'No longer could she and her husband have those quiet times when he would read aloud to her-mostly in German-or give her the epitome of any interesting work he had recently perused.'[1204]

There was reason for WEAA and Dorothy's concern. Several AP correspondents referred to Setta's ill health from mid 1909 onwards and the hopes expressed for her improvement became fainter over the months. Mr Green concluded a long newsy letter in January 1910 with 'a special thought for my dear friend Mrs Axon.'[1205] Edward G Hawke, now an editor at the *Glasgow Herald*, was grieved by the bad news 'you know how sincere a regard we have for her.'[1206]

Business continued as usual for WEAA as his

articles were placed, or occasionally rejected, in *The Manchester Evening News*, the Northern Newspaper Syndicate Kendal, the *Co-operative News*, *The Bookman,* and of course the *Yorkshire Post*. Editors mixed publishing matters with their concerns for Setta. Phillips wrote to WEAA in February 1910 about setting his *Temperance in Bridlington* article into type, gave his opinion of the Northern Newspaper Syndicate, and then turned to Setta, 'I am sorry you can only say there are fluctuations, but I suppose it would be too much to hope for any regular improvement.'[1207]

According to Veronica Boys, Dorothy 'in her teens nursed her mother Setta.' It must have been a hard task for mother and daughter, judging by the family photos, were very affectionate and close.

Sadly, Setta was too ill to give the final sitting for Samuel Lawson Booth and never saw her portrait, a striking study of a handsome and intelligent lady as reproduced in the *VM*. The painting was hung in the Spring Exhibition at the Southport Art Gallery. By the 1960s the portrait had been lost, perhaps in one of Dorothy's frequent moves. Miraculously in July 2021 it was rediscovered by the family. Badly damaged, it has now been beautifully

restored, helped by the original photograph in the *VM*. The colours, face and details are brilliantly clear. The rich brush work shows Setta gazing directly and warmly at the viewer. The necklace she is wearing is thought to be one still in the family. The brooch, the German Eagle, may explain why the portrait was hidden away for two world wars.

Portrait of Setta by Samuel Lawson Booth

Setta endured an operation in June 1909, but it was not successful. In November 1909 an

advertisement appeared in the Suffragette journal *The Vote* for 'Southport Resting Home 3 Albany Road, on Promenade. Vegetarian Diet, refined home ; 25s. a week board-residence; 2,000 books.- Write Warden.'[1208] Given Setta's illness, it is possible the next manager of the home had already stepped in, signalled by the change of name.

Setta died of breast cancer on 17 March 1910. The death certificate records recurrent carcinoma as well as two years exhaustion.

The black edged card mourning card was written in both English and German. The English text is restrained but the German more emotional, translating as:

> 'According to the Lord's holy wish, my lovely, loyally caring wife, our good mother, sister, niece & aunt passed away this night at half past nine, Setta Axon (née Lüft) after a long illness, during which often strengthened by having meekly and piously received holy communion.
> In deepest mourning, the surviving relatives
> I. D. N. [= in dei nomine = in the name of the Lord]
> Wilhelm E. A. Axon'.

Setta's death was reported in several local newspapers as well as in the *Morning Light*, *Alliance News* and *VM*. She was significant in her own right, not only as the wife of a well-known figure.

The funeral service was held at the Roman Catholic Church Southport with a large number attending. Amongst them a Miss Lüft, an aunt or cousin, from Mittenberg, representatives of vegetarian and temperance movements, clerics, friends from Southport and Manchester, including the Greens. Professor Mayor

gave a speech at the graveside in the Catholic Southport Cemetery; he covered Kierkegaard, Richard Rothe, St Lawrence, the morality of pessimism before finally lamenting the loss to the poor of one who had helped them so much, 'never was anyone for whom the poor would sorrow than Mrs Axon.'

The grave, with its simple inscription, is still well cared for.

The Axon family has preserved two documents that really contain most of what is known of Setta. One is the long obituary from the *Alliance News* and the other *In Memoriam Setta Axon*, written by the long- standing family friend Mathilde Hompes and privately printed. Miss Hompes with her first-hand knowledge gave a vivid glimpse of the marriage, their sharing of enterprises such as the Moss Side Library and the Simple Life. She detailed Setta's tireless efforts for others, citing the Hulme Day Nursery, Girls Clubs, Penny Banks, soup kitchens, outreach from the Holy Name in Manchester through to her care for the poor in Southport which continued to the end, 'While our dear friend was suffering keenly, only about a month before her death, she tried to obtain an annual bounty for one of these old women.' Miss Hompes described Setta's involvement in the Manchester Ladies' Literary Club, her friendships with African Americans, welcoming them as visitors to her home, and

finished with a very personal expression of her love for Setta:

> ‘I can honestly say that I have never met a more charming woman, and her charm was but the light shining from that deep, inner goodness which lay below the surface. In numerous letters of condolence received by Dr. Axon, from all sorts and conditions of men and women, the same note breathes throughout.’

Leaving Southport

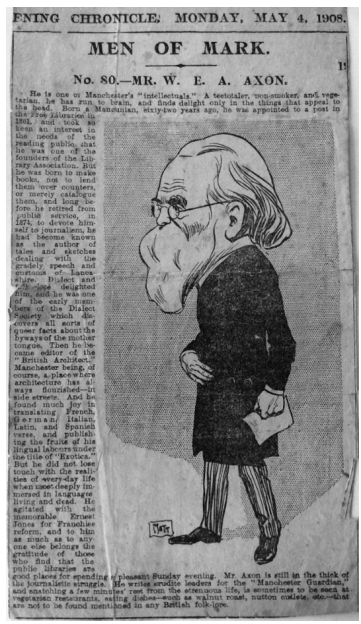
Artists, suffragettes, vegetarians, photographers, scholars, and bibliophiles had all enjoyed the congenial peace of The Simple Life. WEAA and Setta had lived happily in the fresh air and pretty surroundings of Southport, sharing pleasant gatherings with their guests.

WEAA’s devastation at the loss of Setta was overwhelming, and in a familiar pattern he wasted no time in leaving this home and its memories. An old colleague from the *Guardian* later wrote:

> ‘It is doubtful whether he ever recovered from the loss of his second wife. She was a German lady, a teacher in one of the high schools, and their holidays were usually spent together in the neighbourhood of her home in Bavaria. They were completely united in intellectual sympathies, and though she was a Roman Catholic, and he (so far as his religious views were known) a Unitarian, they were one, too, in religious feelings and ideals. They left Manchester after his severance from the “Guardian,” to reside at Southport. He returned to Manchester after her death, apparently glad to lose himself in work, but a shadow had descended upon him and it never

Some associates had never even realised he had left Manchester in the first place. A newspaper clipping of 4 May 1908 has been

preserved by the family in New Zealand. This features WEAA as ‘A Man of Mark’, presenting him as a busy figure on the Manchester scene, inaccurately still in the thick of it at the *Guardian*, ‘A teetotaller, non-smoker and vegetarian, he has run to brain and finds delight only in the things that appeal to the head.’ It is an entertaining article but way off the mark on several counts.



ENING CHRONICLE, MONDAY, MAY 4, 1908.

MEN OF MARK.

No. 80.—MR. W. E. A. AXON.

He is one of Manchester's "intellectuals." A teetotaller, non-smoker, and vegetarian, he has run to brain, and finds delight only in the things that appeal to the head. Born a Mancunian, sixty-two years ago, he was appointed to a post in the Free Library in 1868, and took so keen an interest in the needs of the reading public, that he was one of the founders of the Library Association. But he was born to make books, not to lend them over counters, or merely catalogue them, and long before he retired from public service, in 1871, to devote himself to journalism, he had become known as the author of tales and sketches dealing with the gradely speech and customs of Lancashire. Dialect and folk-lore delighted him, and he was one of the early members of the Dialect Society which discovers all sorts of queer facts about the byways of the mother tongue. Then he became editor of the "British Architect." Manchester being, of course, a place where architecture has always flourished—in side streets. And he found much joy in translating French, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish verse, and publishing the fruits of his illigital labors under the title of "Exotica." But he did not lose touch with the realities of every-day life when most deeply immersed in language living and dead. He agitated with the immortal Ernest Jones for Franchise reform, and to him as much as to anyone else belongs the gratitude of those who find that the public libraries are good places for spending pleasant Sunday evening. Mr. Axon is still in the thick of the journalistic struggle. He writes erudite leaders for the "Manchester Guardian," and snatching a few minutes' rest from the strenuous life, is sometimes to be seen at vegetarian restaurants, eating dishes—such as walnut roast, nutton cutlets, etc.—that are not to be found mentioned in any British folk-lore.

WEAA was back in Manchester by 1911 but still maintained fond ties to Southport.

He remained a member of the Southport Literary and Philosophical Society, and President and Chair of the Southport Food Reform Association. He only resigned as Hon.

Member of the Southport Libraries Committee in November 1911. As always WEAA maintained his friendships through correspondence, and letters from Southport residents continue over his last years. A fellow vegetarian, Mary Caldwell at Leigh, translated a Romani poem for him. In her letter about this she included news of mutual Southport friends.[1209]

This letter is valuable too as it reveals a little of WEAA's approach to translating poetry. Mary Caldwell can only manage a word for word translation, more would be 'quite beyond my powers.' Her version of the Romani *Mother Love* illuminates how WEAA transformed as well as translated.[1210]

Women's Rights

3 Albany Road was a venue where campaigners for women's rights were always welcomed, first by the Axons and then by their successors. An advertisement for 3 Albany Road appeared in November 1910 in *Votes for Women* under the name of a Miss Leigh. The house was now a 'Vegetarian Pension,' with an increase in price although special terms were offered for Bazaar Week in December. Bazaar Week refers to the huge Pageant, Fair and Fete

organised by women nationwide to raise funds for the suffragist Lancashire Campaign. Artists were called upon in Southport to give their support as 'the most generous class of the whole community.' WEAA was consulted over the women's pageant,[1211] This had been transformed from a Coronation pageant to a Lancashire Pageant, offering very wide-ranging spectacles from Launcelot, St Patrick, Jacobite insurrection, witches to the 'fishermen, shrimpers, flying-dutchmen' of Southport.

By 1912 the house was again advertised, now as 'Superior Vegetarian Pension, refined home – Misses Godbold, Seaview.'[1212] Surely these were relations of WEAA's friend, the Hastings photographer Henry Godbold, now retired to London. Both he and his wife were pioneering vegetarians. Mrs Godbold had established two vegetarian boarding houses in St Leonards in the 1880s, and their children and grandchildren held positions in various vegetarian societies. One of the Misses Godbold was likely to be their daughter Winnie Jessie, author of a vegetarian cookbook and later secretary of the VS.

CHAPTER 33

MANCHESTER AND FELLOW WORKERS

WEAA: family photograph by Elliott & Fry

Pension

In June 1910 WEAA's five-year pension ended. Replying to WEAA's thanks for this support, C P Scott wrote that WEAA should always contact him if he ever found himself struggling. There is no evidence that WEAA ever did call on his old editor.

How then did he manage to live without the income from The Simple Life or his pension? According to his account to C P Scott on 20 February 1911, 'So far I have had no real difficulty though my margin is a narrow

one.'[1213]

He had Dorothy to support and according to the 1911 census there was a live-in servant in his household, Eliza Jagger aged thirty. Two years later, he needed private nurses. WEAA was still earning an income from publishing, particularly the regular *Yorkshire Post* work, but perhaps not sufficient to keep them afloat. Did Setta leave WEAA and Dorothy money or was her life insured? As was often the case with married women, Setta did not leave a will, so the question remains unanswered. Probably WEAA still had dividends from the successful William Harrison Knitting Machine and other investments. The substantial amount WEAA eventually left his family suggest he had enough resources to support living near desirable Victoria Park.

Setta's death in March 1910 had deprived Dorothy of a loving mother and left her as her father's main carer. She continued to be his amanuensis and used her talents on at least one occasion in illustrating his poem *The Maid of the South Country* in the *Millgate Monthly*.[1214]

Plymouth Grove

WEAA took a house or rented rooms at No. 191 Plymouth Grove, a

long road, slanting south from the city centre, connecting districts and the major roads of Upper Brook Street and Stockport Road. When the Gaskells moved to No. 42 in 1849 the district was almost rural. Development was inevitable but the surrounding streets remained more suburban than industrial, rich with avenues of trees, long gardens, and fine houses. It is said that the Gaskells' house and others were developed for amusement by a disabled builder. Towards Longsight at the southern end the houses were smaller terraces with tiny front gardens, not mansions standing in their own grounds. It is important to be wary of house numbers in an ever-evolving city like Manchester. In the 1830s the major change came when Manchester moved to a new odd and even system for numbering houses, and the process continued relentlessly, eventually reflecting the hectic history of development, demolition, road systems, world wars and bombings. By the time Meta died in 1913, the Gaskells' house had been renumbered from 42 to 84. WEAA was at 191 and presuming the number has not since changed, the original house has long been demolished. The nearby houses that have survived suggest it was a standard terrace.

Newspaper advertisements show rents ranged from around £55 per month to ten shillings per week for houses on and around Plymouth Grove. No 28, a 'capital family house' with six bedrooms and 'beautified through' was advertised at a rent of £32 per month .[1215] No. 177 with 'semi detached garden back' went for £35 per month.[1216] In June 1912 Phillips wrote to him care of Miss Hompes at 11 Plymouth Grove: perhaps he was between house moves. Late in 1912 WEAA moved to another terrace, No. 41, in neighbouring Richmond Grove. Although No. 41 has gone, the curved terrace of the ones that survive

again give a good idea of the sort of house he lived in.

WEAA would have known the area well for he had frequently visited the Misses Gaskell there: their house was described as the 'nearest possible approach to the absolute centre of the social life of educated Manchester.'[1217] Or as Judge Parry put it, 'It was a salon of Louis XV conceived in the spirit of "Cranford".'[1218] Albert Broadbent and his family, of whom WEAA was very fond, as well as Miss Hompes, all lived at Plymouth Grove at various times. Mr and Mrs William Harrison, Broadbent's parents-in-law were at No. 242, Plymouth Villa. The sculptor, John Cassidy, wrote to WEAA in 1904 from his Lincoln Grove Studio on Plymouth Grove, thanking him for a notice in the *Guardian*.

Plymouth Grove borders the top of Victoria Park, a private trust development dating back to 1837, a prestigious showpiece for the eminent architects who designed the churches, halls, and mansions in disparate styles. Victoria Park had its own police, tollgates, and walls. As the century progressed professional people, politicians and artists joined the wealthy merchants, amongst them Prussian and Chinese families, as residents. Richard Cobden, Ford Madox Brown, Charles Hallé, the Pankhursts, and Professor Henry Roscoe were all once residents of Victoria Park. Twenty listed buildings remain today, and there is a lingering sense of past glories even amongst the decline.

It is no wonder WEAA took sanctuary in this cultural quarter of his

city. As he walked around the area, he would have encountered many he knew in literary, academic, or vegetarian networks. He was surrounded by examples of the architecture of which he had expert appreciation. Amongst these buildings were the original villas of the scheme's founder, Richard Lane, his pupil Alfred Waterhouse's Firwood Mansion and, strikingly modern, Edgar Woods's Arts and Crafts marvel of the First Church of Christian Science. In 1906 the splendid Victoria Baths opened, the terracotta, mosaic, and stained-glass palace, designed by the City Architect, Henry Price.

It might have been expected that he and Dorothy would live with Ernest and Julia out in the desirable Cheshire commuter suburbs of Romiley. But there would have been little room with the two children, Geoffrey from Ernest's first marriage and Florence Evelyn from his second, and all those books and papers. The 1911 census lists a live-in servant, Bertha Hollis.

Ernest's pattern of moves shows a distinct preference for the suburbs, Heaton Moor, Romiley, Bredbury, and then finally the dream realised of his own house in Buxton. WEAA needed to return to his familiar Manchester haunts. As Terry Wyke remarked, 'Axon was always closer to Ancoats than Bowdon.'[1219]

Perhaps Ernest, now a senior librarian, was relieved that father and Dorothy set up their own home closer to town. Geoffrey joined the Manchester libraries in 1911, the third generation to do so, and both he and Ernest would be regular visitors.

WEAA had almost come full circle in his homes in and around Manchester. Friends understood that Plymouth Grove was somehow the best place he could settle, a community and location that offered all that was precious to him in the city. His name

starts appearing again in the MLC *Manchester Quarterly*, suggesting a re-engagement with the local scene. His MLC contributions are as lively as ever. 'Dr. Johnson as a Book-Lover', for example, is as full of delights as of erudition: WEAA mentions how George IV planned to sell off the King's Library to the Emperor of Russia, a rare snippet of history. [1220]

He also re-engaged as a contributor to *Odds and Ends,* the manuscript journal started in 1855 by the St Paul's Literary and Educational Society, amazingly running until 1962. WEAA's address *Books and Reading*, given to 'St P's Lit & Ed Society' in 1910 is both a powerful retrospective view at the advancement of knowledge and a reaffirmation of the need for creative imagination. This is an unusually personal and emotional address in the aftermath of Setta's death. In his praise of the transformations brought by Sunday School education, in his recall of listening to Charles Dickens, and in his insistence that visions, dreams, art and literature are as vital as knowledge, WEAA was appealing very directly to the hearts and minds of his audience, asserting the principles

that have guided him for so long. There is a strange sense of urgency in WEAA's message as if he is conscious of threats of a darkening world:

> 'Every machine that exists in steel or iron, must previously have existed in the grey matter of some human brain. In the same way the city of the future, the city clean, bright with decent living places, with pleasant parks, picture galleries, libraries, and great schools, this can only exist in the future, because it existed in the brain of some thinker, to whom the "practical man" would apply the name of visionary. It is for the dreamers of dreams to mould the future of the world.' [1221]

His friend H M Selby wished him well in his new abode, hoping the change would be 'beneficial and cheering.' She added, 'How interesting to be in a place redolent of delightful Mrs Gaskell!'[1222] Sadly only Meta was left at Plymouth Grove after Julia died in 1908. WEAA was amongst those who helped her in her grief.

H M Selby

H M Selby had recently entered WEAA's circle

of close friends. She started as a business contact but soon evolved into a gossipy but learned correspondent who brightened up WEAA's world, especially after Setta died. Selby is another recognisable denizen of *New Grub Street*, a woman researcher at the BML, but unlike Marian Yule, her downtrodden fictional counterpart, the independent Selby thoroughly enjoyed her work. Selby represents yet another community of print, one that provided the spadework for some of WEAA's endeavours.

Selby was one of a rare but growing sisterhood, women who earned their own living through scholarship and a reader's ticket at the BML. As one of her clients, WEAA greatly appreciated the help of this intuitive expert who could cut through the thorny complexities of the BM catalogue. Selby also visited the V&A on his behalf and recommended her friend Miss Wallis Chapman for other projects. WEAA paid Selby to find quotations, solve bibliographic puzzles, transcribe documents, translate from Latin and Greek and as the relationship developed, to give her opinion on his writing.

There are altogether sixty-two letters from Selby, running from 1907 to 1913 and all combine business with the enjoyable chat of two like-minded intellectuals. As always it should not be assumed that the acquaintance dates from the same time as the first archived letter. Yet it is hard to imagine WEAA would not archive all the literary matter Selby sent to

him. The whole style of her letters is refreshingly unfussy; business matters are dealt with promptly. They were always signed in a professional manner by 'H M Selby.' In 1912 Selby wrote out her name in full, Henrietta Mary Selby. Her full name was needed for her contribution to a book WEAA was editing, *The Bazaar*.

An independent worker, Selby had broken free from repressive conventions. Visiting her pompous clergyman brother, she had little patience with the ladies she met in the Cheltenham drawing rooms, tiring of their mockery. She described her frustration to the sympathetic WEAA, 'A fortnight in a churchy, Conservative, socially exclusive world is as much as I can stand! & this time I found the women particularly trying in their attitude to the Franchise Question- not so much by their opposition as by their (apparent) inability to take the matter seriously. Of course one does not mind a joke on almost any subject, & every question has its comic side, but the women at Cheltenham would not look at any other side of this question!'[1223]

The Selby Lens

Selby's letters give a unique glimpse of WEAA's final years. Their

relationship was a business one that swiftly evolved into a sympathetic friendship where holidays, troubles and annoyances were shared as well as chat about lectures, meetings, conferences attended and recent reading. Selby was grateful for the tickets WEAA sent her for RSL lectures and she repaid him with reports. She attended two RSL meetings where WEAA's papers were read in his absence, one on Shakespeare and Merry England, the other on Milton.

Selby also wrote of other mutual interests. She was involved in women's rights, was a fellow member of the Humanitarian League, and was interested enough to attend the First Universal Races Congress in 1910, finding Dr Du Bois the most impressive. She discovered WEAA's concern for birds and their exploitation for fashion, 'I am glad also that you are in sympathy with the protection of birds. I belong to the Society formed for that object.'[1224] In literary matters both shared the same respectful approach to writers, wishing to appreciate rather than scorn, 'I am so glad you admire Longfellow & don't treat him in the supercilious way that is now fashionable.'[1225]

Selby rarely ventured beyond Cheltenham, Bristol, and the Cotswolds for her breaks from London and viewed WEAA as a 'constant traveller'[1226] as he dashed around either on jaunts or on literary, library, vegetarian, and

temperance business. His trips to Glasgow, Wales, Oxford, London, Germany, St Andrews, Vegetarian Summer Schools all feature in her letters. Even in late 1911 Selby wrote admiringly of his ‘long travels’ and exclaimed ‘how energetic you are.’ [1227]

Selby was far more advanced as a Latin and Greek scholar than the self-educated WEAA and she too was adept in languages, mentioning she had taught herself Spanish. Even so, WEAA’s level of scholarship as revealed in Selby’s letters is astonishing. The details of signs, punctuation, Greek metre, manuscript annotations are hard to comprehend particularly as WEAA’s original queries can only be surmised. Selby’s approval must have been as precious to WEAA as the respect he gained from Professor Newman and Professor Mayor. Equally WEAA trusted her when he sent drafts of translations or poems for comment. She could be relied upon for an honest and considered opinion, with a kind soothing at the end of an analysis, ‘Anyhow, I like your rendering very much, as a whole ; these are only spots on the sun, & - except the quantity of ‘Athene’ – may not even be spots, only distorted visions due to my own defective

eyes. It is a pleasure to have intellectual interest presented to me, in the way you so kindly present them.'[1228] WEAA and Selby discussed a wide range of topics, including historic fiction, Georgian poetry, and scientific memoirs. Selby sought to know more flood stories and in her very last letter teasingly hoped that WEAA did not subscribe to the notions of Oliver Lodge. Like WEAA Selby was deeply immersed in the literature of the past but alert to the modern world and its changes.

Late Flourishings

Names and topics discussed with Selby often related to WEAA's later papers and projects. The female Don Quixote she researched appeared in WEAA's paper on Spanish literature. WEAA found a sympathetic audience in Selby for his projects on such topics as the Knavish Shakespeare, Coleridge's letters, Shakespeare's Dark Lady, and Milton and press freedom. Some of the research, for example on Milton, resulted in RSL lectures, in which Selby took justified pride.

Her transcription of Coleridge's letters resulted in at least two of WEAA's pamphlets. WEAA achieved a literary sensation with this investigation into a pre-sequel of Coleridge's *Christobel*. The complicated case was reported in several newspapers, including the *Yorkshire Post*, proud of their own journalist's triumph, 'As already reported in "The Yorkshire Post" Mr. W. E. A. Axon has solved a literary puzzle which has baffled students of Coleridge. …Mr. E. H. Coleridge, an authority on many such matters, attributed the sequel to James Hogg, not a bad guess, when we recall the "Ettrick Shepherd's" astonishing versatility—and probably that would have been the last word on the subject had not Mr. Axon, with persistent ingenuity, followed another scent.'[1229]

WEAA was still admired in the 1970s by

American academics for bringing ‘a very triumphant finis to a difficult piece of literary investigation.’[1230]

Selby transcribed classical and romance language authors who then appeared in WEAA’s anthologies, in the pages of the *VM* and other publications. WEAA’s involvement in Welsh literature was facilitated by Selby. She checked Welsh sources for him at the BML, and as usual added in her expert assessment, ‘As you knew that one copy of the *Cerdd* (11595 b.b.73) was “printed at Barbaroon by P. Evans”, I have got out the other copy – wh. Is not the one fr. Wh. I transcribed. While waiting for books, I have taken down title page &c – It seems to me rather different fr. What I copied but perhaps I am wrong. The ballad is not a broadside – It consists of 8 small pages & is like a tract. It is bound up in a volume, inscribed on back – “Welsh Songs &c. 1707-1870 [1]” I have not revised the title-page, as I only wanted to give you a general idea.’[1231]

Seventeenth Century Printers and Others

WEAA pursued some eclectic quarries. Raban was a seventeenth century soldier, a colourful adventurer who in middle age became the

printer to the University of St Andrews. WEAA's research into Raban was declined as not within scope by the editor of *The Sottish Review,* softening the blow by a mention of WEAA'S De Quincey paper, being published that week, 'It is very interesting.'[1232] WEAA's paper was finally published by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.[1233] His interest in Raban and other seventeenth century Scottish printers continued. In 1912 the librarian at the University of St Andrews, alerted his friend to some rarities, 'As you are interested in Raban.'[1234]

The RSL were pleased with WEAA's idea of the fragment of Sydrach, but 'want notes to cover the whole work.' [1235] The article was eventually published in the *RSL Transactions* and reprinted as a pamphlet.[1236]

The VS were always happy to have papers with a vegetarian link and provided a platform for WEAA's Swedenborg papers.

Joy Hancox in her study of John Byrom attributes an important discovery to WEAA, the finding of twenty letters from John Stansfield to Byrom.[1237] I investigated this further. It appears John Eglington Bailey planned to edit the letters. They were lost

after his death and rediscovered by WEAA in 1903. He also found thirty of Byrom's poems during his research at Chetham's. In 1912 these letters and poems were finally published in a much-delayed Chetham's Society volume.[1238] WEAA's discoveries and his help in the editing were gratefully acknowledged in the volume, and a reference given to the *Guardian* account of the discoveries.[1239] WEAA's fascination with Byrom went back years.

Selby and other friends realised that health breakdowns, grief, upheavals of moving never stopped WEAA from writing though unsurprisingly his production dipped in 1910. The theme of WEAA's fragile health runs throughout the AP correspondence, a painful pattern over the years. There are many mentions of his illnesses, his susceptibility to the cold of winter and to the polluted air of Manchester. January was a deadly month for WEAA as the AP correspondence reflects. He suffered repeatedly from the blight of lumbago, rheumatic fever, bronchitis, and influenza, the legacy of childhood neglect. From 1911 onwards close friends make guarded references to a new illness. WEAA, like Setta, had developed cancer.

Business as Usual

The return to his beloved city comforted WEAA and to some extent restored his usual levels of activity. The AP correspondence indicates a productive period, especially in 1911. Much relates to his contributions to newspapers, journals, society publications, anthologies, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the publications of the National Home Reading

Union. Many of these, like the *Antiquary*, the *Athenaeum*, the *Library*, *Manchester City News*, *The Nation*, *Pitman's Journal* had published him for years but there were new ones such as *The British Weekly*, *The Inquirer* and *TP's Magazine*. Publishers, even those who rejected some of his offerings, regularly contacted him for book reviews. The bread-and-butter work of his regular articles in the *Yorkshire Post* now encompassed wider topics as well as biographies. From the very start WEAA was a valued contributor to the Co-operative Society's *Millgate Monthly* and his articles, amongst them several of his finest, appeared from 1906 through to 1913. Mr Green preserved some in the Axon[i]ana scrapbook. WEAA and Mr Green had never lost touch with each other and WEAA's return to Manchester enabled a resumption of their collaborative friendship and mutual interests in the Brontë, De Quincey, and Gaskell collections at Moss Side Library. WEAA's RSL lecture, *The Canon of De Quincey*, was greatly praised, and published posthumously.[1240] He renewed his interest in The Manchester Dante Society, giving a lecture on *Hebrew Visions of Heaven and Hell* in 1912 and writing several

papers on Dante themes: one especially aroused interest, his look at English influences on Dante.

As well as publishing matters, this period of AP correspondence is full of WEAA's scholarly exchanges with researchers like Selby, with librarians, Welsh scholars and as ever with local historians and clerics who might provide answers to puzzles. It is in this period too where WEAA won acclaim for his work with A G E Phillips at Haigh Hall and the publication of the shorthand table. It is pleasant to find C P Scott asking him to pursue some Scott family history whilst the *Yorkshire Post* editor, Phillips, asked him to translate letters from the Portuguese. Other languages and cultures still fascinated WEAA as he delved into Greek fragments, *Dorando*, the *Story of Al Raomi*, *Lucian,* and the *Golden Legend*. John Rylands Library opened new treasures for him, enhanced by discussions with the librarian Guppy.

In July 1912, the Rev. W R Rosedale requested WEAA's help for a visiting German scholar. Dr Sixtus was coming on a field trip to collect northern dialects: as Rosedale feebly

described, ‘He carries a thing with him to speak into.’[1241] WEAA noted ‘Yes’ on the letter, surely eager to revisit his own experiences in Lancashire dialect. WEAA would have been intrigued too by the recording gadget. Dr Sixtus wrote to WEAA from Clitheroe and Wigan but plans to meet up never materialised. However, Dr Sixtus was extremely grateful to WEAA for his letters and the contacts he suggested, especially a Mr Ashton who helped him ‘in such an extensive way!’[1242] WEAA had not lost his touch.

A Manchester Library Retrospective

There was even a new library article, published in *Bildung und Staat Volksbibliotheken.*[1243] WEAA wrote with authority on a subject that had run through his life in *The Manchester Municipal Libraries*. He paid generous tribute to the first three Chief Librarians and commented very fairly on the fourth one, his old colleague and friend, Sutton, ‘Under his care the libraries have advanced greatly in public appreciation and usefulness.’ It is a concise but colourful account, as full of facts as it is of glimpses of the people and the rare collections behind the scenes. WEAA was revisiting collections he

knew intimately and, in some cases, where his contact with the owners had encouraged their eventual deposit at the Reference Library.

Amongst those mentioned were the Thomas Bellot's Chinese library that had inspired the young WEAA, the Thomas Fuller material collected by John Eglington Bailey, and well used by WEAA in completing Bailey's work, and Bailey's shorthand library that WEAA knew so well, donated by Henry Boddington. The Gypsy material came from Paul Bataillard, a fellow Romani scholar, and WEAA was probably directly responsible for the English Dialect Society depositing its folk speech material. Literary books relating to Hazlitt, Lamb and Leigh Hunt came from Alexander Ireland via T R Wilkinson. French Revolutionary material came from John Crompton, and scholarly items from R D Darbishire. All these were familiar names to WEAA.

WEAA of course highlighted the precious Thomas de Quincey collections and Mrs Gaskell collections at the Moss Side Branch, as well as the Brontë collection donated by J J Gleave. WEAA pointed out as he had always done, the desirability of foreign language material, the necessity of patent information for inventors and manufacturers, the need to capture the history of trade, and the role of libraries in local history, their responsibility to 'become the receptacle for all that can illustrate the local history of the district and the lives of its distinguished citizens.' WEAA described the plans for a new library building on the Infirmary site (which never happened) but basically this article is a retrospective view of those elements in which he had played a vital part.

It is appropriate that WEAA's final library article should be this one on Manchester's achievements over more than half a century. He ends with a poem, not one of his, but 'At a Free Library' by the poet and orator, Sir Lewis Morris, who as a boy had been present at the Campfield opening. Presumably, like WEAA, he was one of the first child readers. Fittingly this article appeared in a German journal: European colleagues, like American ones, highly regarded WEAA the librarian and internationalist.

Nature and Dialect: Rev. Oswald Birchall

There are six letters from the Rev. Oswald Birchall to WEAA, dated from 1904 to 1912. These would have recalled a great deal for WEAA for he shared some key interests with Birchall, described as a 'conscientious and political progressive rector.'[1244] Serving in Lancashire until 1878, the Rev. Oswald Birchall and his wife were much loved by their neighbours, William and May Morris, when he was rector of Buscot. Birchall now wrote nostalgically of Lancashire and enclosed copies of his dialect poems, one being the inevitable boggart, and some being renderings of Wordsworth and Omar Khayyam. In only six letters, Birchall explored several topics dear to WEAA such as paper technology, dialect, vegetarianism, abolition, and anti-vivisection.

Struggling with poverty, his wife's dementia, and saddened by the 'social evil' of the breakdown of family bonds, he seems a rather lonely figure. Understandably there is no reference in the letters to the tragic execution of his younger brother for murder or his own efforts to save him.[1245] But Birchall persevered with the good fight to make the world a better place, expressing a vision that WEAA would have understood, and making an

intriguing connection between nature and dialect, 'I am producing a long essay advocating a return towards the ideal of nature, not only as regards diet, but in all parts of human life; and to this I am adding some verses in the mixed Lancashire dialect as I have known it in towns.'
He thanked WEAA for reviewing his *Poems in Lancashire Speech*[1246] in the *VM*. Birchall's mixing of dialect and classical languages is perhaps unexpected at this date. He admitted himself that apart from Burnley and Barrow his book was 'not much appreciated in most parts of Lancashire.'[1247] Birchall's letters and book are an unexpected and curious addition to the history of Lancashire dialect.

Talks

WEAA was still popular as a speaker. Throughout this last period, he continued to give talks until his health restricted him and others read his papers for him, for example at the RSL,[1248] and at the Pitman Centenary in 1913.[1249]

Responses in AP indicate that amongst the notable talks he gave in this period were *The Aims of Librarianship* at the Toynbee Hall, on Mrs Gaskell at Longsight Free Church, and a

sermon at Glasgow Unitarian church.

Rejections

Editors regularly mined WEAA for information. His knowledge was precious as he was now a survivor of a vanished age. He had unique entry into the De Quincey, Gaskell, Cobden, and Coleridge families. The editors of the *Nation*, the *Inquirer*, and the *British Weekly*, all encouraged him to send in articles for consideration. Paul E. More at the *Nation* even wrote, 'I should like very much if you could send me an occasional article of this kind [Country Conversations] which would lighten up a department that tends to become heavy and technical.'[1250] This must have surprised WEAA, used to being criticised himself as too heavy and scholarly: typical comments he had received on his rejected topics were 'done to death'[1251] or 'not popular enough'.[1252]

Not unnaturally, WEAA in this troubled time was drawn to the familiar comfort of scholarly and literary investigations. On balance in these last years, WEAA's work was accepted rather than rejected but the more pedantic explorations were hard for editors to swallow.

W Robertson Nicholl of *The British Weekly* was always honest, 'Many thanks for the article but I think the point is too small. It is more suited for Notes & Queries'.[1253] WEAA had little

luck with *The Sunday Strand* and its successor *Woman at Home*. *The Bookman* now tended to reject his offerings, the *Manchester City News* could not commit to a series and even the accommodating *Pitman's Journal* balked at 'Shorthand in the Oxyrhynchus papyrus'.[1254] The sons of William Lloyd Garrison remained loyal to WEAA, publishing his mainly literary pieces in the *Nation*, but even they declined some contributions. The George Meredith piece was found to be too close to a *Guardian* article and WEAA was thanked for being 'very frank' about this.[1255] Others were not suited to the tastes of American readers. The editor, Francis Harrison, welcomed WEAA's study of John Brown but as mentioned previously it is not clear if this was ever actually published in the *Nation*.

The gentle Drummond of *The Inquirer* published some articles but apologetically could not commit to a WEAA sermon as the journal was rather 'overcrowded' at the time.[1256] WEAA never wasted an opportunity for recycling and this sermon was probably the one he had just given in May 1911 at Glasgow Unitarian church, acclaimed as 'a lesson that will long be remembered by them.'[1257]

As a journalist WEAA was well accustomed to forthright rejections from newspapers, followed up frequently by proposals for other topics. The *Guardian* turned down an article, apparently describing WEAA's trip in July 1910 to Germany on the grounds of 'too much on travel,' but commissioned articles on Mrs Gaskell and Charles Dickens.

Meta Gaskell
WEAA and Meta had long been friends. Julia's death in 1908 and then WEAA's return to the neighbourhood strengthened the bonds. Meta was away a great deal but kept in contact with her vivid, scrawled, and vivacious notes. Sometimes WEAA needed to tread carefully, especially over anything relating to her mother's personal life rather than her works.

Mrs Gaskell, bruised by reactions to her *Life of Charlotte Bronte*, was determined that there would be no biography of her life. Deeply respecting their mother's wishes, both Julia and Meta Gaskell had learnt to be wary of would-be biographers. They fully trusted WEAA and Mr Green. After Julia died in 1908 the devastated Meta became even more panicked by intrusions. She consulted WEAA over the inaccuracies in Mrs Ellis Chadwick's book and even worried over some of his projects, particularly an article on *Country Conversations*, 'the family quite hate any public

notice of it.' In the same letter she emphasised, 'All I told you about Miss Georgiana, pronounced Georgina, Follet, too, was meant in perfect confidence.' *Country Conversations* was published under a different title in the *Nation.*

She was reassured by his replies. Meta shared her deep feelings with WEAA and clearly drew comfort from his understanding, especially of her mother, 'The pathos of that passage you quote from "Cranford' - - always fills my eyes with tears, just as you once told me that it had always done your eyes and your beloved Wife's-.'[1258]

On behalf of W Robertson Nicoll, he consulted his old friend Meta Gaskell about her mother's articles that had apparently appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. In 1911 he consulted her about the Tower House at Silverdale and later received her thanks for the resulting 'beautiful article' in the *Inquirer*.[1259] She also praised his article on Longfellow, *On a Wayside Inn.* The only sharp exchange in the correspondence was in the autumn of 1911 when Meta believed WEAA and Mr Green had co-operated with her bête-noire, Mrs Ellis

Chadwick. Meta was quick to apologise when she discovered her mistake, handsomely admitting, 'Of course, I was a brute! Please forgive.'[1260] This hurried postcard was rapidly followed by a letter and an invitation to lunch for WEAA and Dorothy, '"In my wrath" I thought you and Mr Green had been in collusion with Mrs C [Chadwick]. And now I have a kind of "Gelert' feeling.'[1261]

Both WEAA and Dorothy attended the Vegetarian Summer School at Arnside in September 1911. Meta was hoping they would visit her at Silverdale but then found she would be away.

Fisher Unwin

Manchester men had not bought the Cobden book in the quantities Fisher Unwin envisaged and he acknowledged it was not 'a publishing success.' He did not regret this for 'I went into the whole matter con amore'.[1262] He contacted WEAA late in 1910 on the need to dispose of the stock. Fisher Unwin did not lose faith in WEAA and only weeks later he was pursuing him with an idea for a book on Manchester as part of a series on the great manufacturing cities, 'modern volumes rather than historical'.[1263]

WEAA had proved his ability to take such an approach with his essay in Sutton's *Handbook*

and Guide to Manchester. This was shrewdly produced as a reference work for those attending conferences held in the city.[1264] WEAA's essay covered the city's political history, slightly edited for different editions. He took the opportunity to mention Manchester's pre-eminence in causes precious to him, including the women's suffrage movement, United Kingdom Alliance, the Sunday Closing Association, the National Public School Association, the Statistical Society and the Sanitary Association. In the 1908 edition he concluded 'Manchester, although its history goes back to the days of the Romans, is essentially modern.'[1265]

WEAA sent suggestions and questions to Fisher Unwin on the Manchester proposal, adding 'I regret to say that I cannot afford to work on the prospect of future returns.'[1266] By the 6 March 1912, the date of the draft, WEAA was aware that he might not survive cancer. Fisher Unwin sent a contract that WEAA rejected, disliking the idea of royalties. Unwin was baffled by WEAA's hesitations, 'even now I do not why you do not wish to prepare the book.'[1267] Late in 1912 he was still trying to persuade WEAA to take it on, offering £50 for

the copyright. It seems that WEAA finally agreed and in January 1913 Unwin sent a proposal for the title and for a de-luxe subscription edition. WEAA added a note, dated 15 March on the letter, praising the title and plan but expressing dislike for the subscription approach. On 18 March 1913 Fisher Unwin wrote to WEAA that he was glad he was considering the book, but WEAA added a note dated 31 May that he could not undertake it.

It is a tribute to WEAA's professionalism as a writer that Fisher Unwin was so reluctant to abandon the idea.

William Harrison Ainsworth
WEAA was an obvious candidate as a biographer for Harrison Ainsworth. He had written a long memoir, an introduction to the novels, and had shared some of Harrison Ainsworth's old friends such as James Crossley and R W Procter.

Yet WEAA declined the opportunity and instead suggested S M Ellis. Once Ellis agreed, WEAA gave him generous support. Ellis was grateful and deeply respectful of the older writer. Ellis produced a glorious two volume biography, a brilliant and lively capture of Harrison Ainsworth and his world, entertaining almost on a Dickensian scale.[1268] WEAA, professional and conscientious as he was, could not have brought Harrison

Ainsworth to life in the same way. The depiction of the old Manchester that haunted Ainsworth, Crossley, and Procter, is, however, very like WEAA's descriptions and surely owes much to him. Ellis wrote to WEAA to thank him for his 'appreciative reviews.' As well as expressing his gratitude, Ellis underlined the value he placed on WEAA's opinion, 'you know more of its subject' than any other reviewer.[1269]

Swansong: *The Bazaar, Pictures, Poetry, Prose*[1270]

Another reason WEAA hesitated over Unwin's proposed Manchester book is that in the summer of 1912 he was immersed in a major project, a souvenir book for the National Temperance Alliance Bazaar held at the City Hall Manchester on 15 to 19 October. WEAA had experience with this popular form of fund raising. He referred to contributing in 1872 'to a small periodical issued in connection with a London bazaar.'[1271] Then in 1891 there are several AP references to a bazaar book that WEAA was producing for a VS fundraiser event, but I have failed to trace any copies.

The 1912 souvenir book has virtually vanished apart from copies held at Liverpool University, the Bodleian and MCLA. The MCLA

copy was presented by WEAA.

It is a magnificent and handsome production, a tribute both to WEAA's expertise in the craft of books and to his skills as an editor. *The Bazaar* is outstanding in terms of quality, artwork, and contributions, all previously unpublished, from a range of contemporary writers. It is strikingly modern in style and contents. WEAA may have written little of emerging writers and artists, but *The Bazaar* gives ample evidence that he was up to date with current trends.

There are no publication or printing details in the book. WEAA in his Preface celebrates the splendid goods the writers and artists have brought to the 'The National Temperance Alliance Bazaar' but the full story only emerges from the AP and MCLA correspondence.

Organising *The Bazaar*

WEAA was editor, contributor, organiser, and distributor of *The Bazaar*. He was assiduous in seeking contributions from 'the skilful craftsman and craftswomen of literature and art' as he described in the Preface, and the correspondence shows mainly positive responses to his requests. It was certainly a bold demand for WEAA wanted 'unpublished matter but grateful for anything.'[1272] Replies poured in during the weeks of July and August

1912. There were around fifty offering contributions or support and only a handful of refusals. The refusals were usually expressed politely although a Talbot Smith from Surrey was annoyed to be asked when he was not in sympathy with ‘the extreme views of your association.’ [1273]

Several correspondents had not been in touch with WEAA for years and were delighted to revisit their pasts. Richard Whiteing in London sent in his contribution, adding the rare glimpse of working life at the *Guardian,* quoted previously.

The Bazaar represented an immense amount of

work for WEAA, not only in soliciting and acknowledging the contributions but in answering queries, sending out individual proofs to each author, and dealing with all the business of printing and distribution. Deadlines were tight and some contributors became concerned about when they would receive the press proofs.

There were two art editors, Frederick Garnett, and William Canning. The latter designed the striking cover with its huge Arabic script, surrounded by the English title, *The Bazaar, Pictures, Poetry, Prose*. The book triumphantly fulfilled WEAA's intention of creating a magical place for readers, 'But in all its forms it retains the idea of an oriental glow of colour and richness, and conjures up a place where things of beauty and of use are displayed to attract the eye of the visitor.'[1274]

The names of authors and illustrators reflect WEAA's wide networks, from parochial to international, and include old friends like the Sand, Stone and Salt merchant, Joseph Cronshaw of Dingle Cottage, as well as illustrious newcomers such as Edward Carpenter and eminent academics like German Sims Woodhead, Professor of Pathology at Cambridge University.
There are illustrations from over thirty artists, the familiar names of T Raffles Davison and Charles Folkard appear with those newly emerging such as W Heath Robinson, Miss Margaret W Tarrant, and J A Shepherd.

The Bazaar: Content
Fifty authors created a rich content of stories, poems, articles, and translations.

WEAA contributed *Lament for a Youthful Mirmillo*, 'a pathetic human document', based on a fragile Greek fragment at John Rylands Library. WEAA covered the reconstruction and interpretation of the fragment, paraphrased the verse, and described the gladiatorial combats that awaited Mirmillo unless the heroine of the verse could rescue him. As well as his classical erudition, WEAA makes the point that the gladiators were fed a vegetarian diet to develop muscle and to fatten them. Odd as this may seem WEAA's assertion has been corroborated by modern research. Altogether this is a fine example of WEAA's best writing, intriguing, clear and informative whilst displaying poetic sensibility.

Amongst the women authors there are familiar names from the AP correspondence: Maude Little the novelist, Henrietta Mary Selby, Margaret L. Blaise, author of *The Esperanto Manual*, and an unexpected one, Isabella Fyvie Mayo, the formidable abolitionist who persecuted Miss Impey as related previously. WEAA, the peacemaker, managed to remain friends with both women. Miss Mayo wrote

warmly, ‘I have often had the pleasure to be a collaborator of yours. (I wonder why I did not write the good Saxon word “fellow worker”!)’.[1275] Like WEAA Miss Mayo was a contributor to the *Millgate Monthly*.
The contribution of an Esperanto poem and its translation is striking as perhaps this is one of the first times Esperanto was included in an anthology. Margaret L. Blaise was certainly grateful to have her poem published and felt ‘indebted to you for the insertion of Esperanto in your Souvenir.’[1276] Born Margaret Lily Jones she was a Liverpool woman of Welsh origin, married in 1910 to a Belgian Esperanto pioneer, Paul Blaise: Esperanto was their ‘home language.’ She mentioned WEAA in the ‘unimaginatively titled magazine “Esperanto” published in Switzerland in 1908.’[1277] The context seems to be the activities of the vegetarian movement. Little is known of the links between them, but their friendship is another example of the interesting crossovers in WEAA’s networks, and how whenever possible he persuaded his friends into print.

WEAA’s linguistic interests enlivened *The Bazaar* with his selection of pieces in Romani, Esperanto, Italian, Welsh, and with

translations from Latin and Greek. Even the flyer was printed in Welsh as well as English, appropriate for WEAA's Manceinion role as well as appealing to the large Welsh community in Manchester. *The Bazaar* is in the spirit of a true marketplace, resounding with different tongues.

The book received great acclaim and not just from the contributors who all received copies. The bestselling novelist Hall Caine was fond of WEAA, admired the book and was sorry he had been too late to contribute. The feminist poet S Gertrude Ford summed it all up as 'the charming book which is the souvenir of your great effort in a worthy cause. We are all delighted with the volume: it is most artistically got up, and the array of talent contained between its covers is truly imposing.'[1278] She congratulated WEAA on his own contributions. Ernest Baker also singled out WEAA's concluding poem, 'I was touched & Charmed by your beautiful lines at the end of the book.'[1279] This was WEAA's poem *Contrast*, a sad reflection on loss, 'The day that is past will never return.'

President of the Vegetarian Society

Unsurprisingly given the pressures of earning a living as a freelance,

the move to The Simple Life, and then Setta's declining health, WEAA had gradually curtailed some of his voluntary activities. He left the Bibliographic Society in 1908, perhaps tired of Pollard's quibbles over his articles, and in the same year resigned as Examiner in Economics for the Temperance Collegiate Association, accepting the honorary role of Vice-President. He resigned from the anti-liquor Central Sunday Closing Association in 1909, from the position of Vice-President of the Anti-Tobacco Society, and at some stage ceased to be an examiner for the Indian students of the Golden Templars.

Being sensible was cast aside when WEAA accepted the supreme role in the movement that was so precious to him. On 12 April 1911 at the Vegetarian Restaurant 5 Fountain Street, Manchester, WEAA was acclaimed as the new President of the VS and 'numerous eulogistic references were made.' Old friends, William Harrison, Miss Hompes, the Rev. A.O. Broadley, and many others paid tribute, and representatives attended from the United Kingdom Alliance and from the Manchester and Salford Temperance Union of which WEAA was also president. The report in the *VM* recognised the choice would be a popular one and that WEAA was 'so well known to our people.' As a scholar, a man of letters with an international reputation, WEAA was a worthy successor of the two previous presidents and professors, Francis William Newman, and John E. B. Mayor. It must have been poignant to

WEAA to step into the shoes of his two revered friends.

Certainly, WEAA more than any other deserved to be president. For years he had been loyal to the movement, guiding it through difficult times with his expertly researched papers like *Corn and Cattle* that reached beyond the community and won wide regard. He compiled a list of vegetarian literature for the Vegetarian Federal Union: this was printed as a catalogue. Members were cheered by his poems, the unusual topics he covered and by his energetic campaigns for the vegetarian restaurant in Manchester and dinners for malnourished children. He had been treasurer, secretary, editor of the *VM*, vice-president, delegate at international congresses and friend to so many. As a distinguished figure in other circles, WEAA both reinforced his friendships with fellow vegetarians and brought others into the net. As a peacemaker he helped to soothe the conflicts between the predominantly northern VS and the London Vegetarian Society, and contributed to their journal, the *Vegetarian Review*. He had been given a two-page spread in the *Vegetarian Review's* history of the

movement with a large new photograph.[1280]

He was unusually modest too. As chair of the 56th annual meeting in 1903, a prestigious position, he humorously compared himself to a fly in amber, 'the creature itself was not particularly rare or interesting, but it was in a most surprising situation.'[1281] He added he was only there as the preferred choices could not take up the invitation.

The VS members were proud of WEAA as their accomplished international representative. As well as his success at the Chicago and St. Louis meetings, he was first Congress President of the International Vegetarian Union in 1909, and afterwards a Congress Committee member. He even managed to travel to Brussels in 1910, accompanied by his fellow delegate, Miss Hompes. He gave his paper *Vegetarianism and the Intellectual Life* in French.[1282] The VS benefitted hugely from WEAA's fascination for European languages, culture and literature.

The report in the *VM* of the new President naturally eulogised his achievements but an unusually affectionate tone ran throughout. WEAA, more perhaps than his distinguished

predecessors, was a beloved friend to them all, ‘Our President is widely loved as well as respected, and we are sure that his many friends will join us in the fervent wish that he may long be spared to us not only to grace the position he is so well fitted to fill, but to remain as the brother and friend that we feel him to be.’[1283]

There were good reasons for the increasing concerns expressed by the VS and other friends over the state of WEAA’s health.

CHAPTER 34

A LARGER & MORE JOYOUS ROOM

Scuttling

In November 1910 an editor of *OED*, Henry Bradley, sent a query on the term ‘scuttling’ to C P Scott who passed it on to WEAA. WEAA then consulted his old friend the artist and activist, Charles Rowley.

Rowley, like WEAA, had first-hand knowledge of the Scuttlers, the gangs of youths and girls who had terrorised Manchester’s streets and crofts. WEAA dismissed the *OED* definition suggested by the Victorian hero ‘Chinese Gordon’, basically anyone wearing clogs, whilst Rowley remembered larking round the streets of Ancoats but being too little and cowardly to go scuttling. It is a fascinating correspondence and gives a glimpse of how unfazed Rowley and WEAA were by the tough side of their city. WEAA commented, ‘No doubt there were some great roughs amongst the Scuttlers, but I should not think they were often as bad as Rugby football.’ [1284]

WEAA explained that he had not answered

earlier as ‘unluckily I have been in bed most of the time since, which does not facilitate research.’ He was still incapacitated in December when his apologies were read out on his behalf at an RSL meeting. Charles Higham, the London bookseller reported this to him, adding ‘Hope this will find you out of bed and restored to health.’[1285]

Phillips wrote to him in December, returning his ‘excellent biography’ of Professor Mayor as an obituary was not required by the *Yorkshire Post*. He added he was sorry WEAA had been ‘caught by the weather’ and hoped he would soon be active again. Phillips described how he felt old and overworked, wishing he could ‘kick up my heels in some country district and do some literary work after my own heart, before I come to the natural end of my days.’ But ever humorous he added, ‘You and I have both of us had a merry time so far as occupation goes. If Satan has got hold of us in anyway, it is not because we lacked other things to do.’[1286] Considering how these two comrades had worked non-stop since they were youths it is a remarkably positive view.

Phillips assumed WEAA had been ‘caught by

the weather.' [1287] Other friends likewise supposed WEAA's illness was related to the harsh weather, 'neglected chills are extremely dangerous this wintery season.'[1288] Over the years WEAA had frequently suffered rheumatism, lumbago, and bronchitis, especially in winter, but this attack was particularly severe. He was still struggling in May 1911. Meta Gaskell was more specific in her references to his illness, and it is from her letters, written in dashing handwriting and usually in haste, that it appears WEAA had suffered from bronchial pneumonia.

Underlying illness

At some stage WEAA started to confide in close friends that he had a serious underlying illness. How far they knew the actual details is debatable. WEAA had developed rectal cancer, not an easy illness to discuss. His friends generally refer to an unspecified growth. Ernest, reflecting on his own great age at sixty-seven, wrote, 'My father was that age when he died, and everybody thought he was a very old man. I suppose they think the same of me, though I do not feel anything as old as the Pater looked.' WEAA with his bushy beard and old-fashioned clothes had long given the appearance of age but he now looked fragile in photographs.

In March 1911 WEAA alerted Phillips that his sister Sara who lived in Manchester was unwell. In June 1912 Phillips wrote sadly, 'Yes, our friends go. I feel as if I had got into the region of icebergs. No doubt you are aware that Sara Maria [Phillips' sister] is in

bed with cancer of the stomach. She has not been told the character of her disease.'[1289] He was devastated by the double blow of his beloved sister's death a few days later and by the news of WEAA's illness, 'I hope the report I have of your health is somewhat exaggerated, and that you will have an early recovery. The double loss has given me a bad shock.'[1290]

WEAA continued to be active in his research, publications, and duties as the President of the VS. He had managed despite his illness to produce the magnificent souvenir *Bazaar* book in the summer of 1912. Yet he must have struggled as Selby hoped in February 1912 that 'you will soon have help in your work.'[1291]

There is no indication that he did more than to rely on Dorothy. Like Sophie and Kitty before her, she acted as his assistant and throughout the period she was reported as accompanying him to vegetarian and literary gatherings. Meta Gaskell commented, 'What a beautiful hand your Daughter writes! And what a comfort to have such a secretary!'[1292] Dorothy penned his correspondence when he

eventually became too weak to do so himself.

WEAA's letters in AP are mainly in his own writing, the drafts often pencilled. Sometimes his official letters like the one to Balfour concerning Mrs Sutton's pension were printed. His exasperation with Balfour's attitude is openly expressed in his personal comments to George Milner, 'There is no sense or principles in it.'[1293] Unusually on 25 October 1910 he typed a letter to Percy Ames, and the purple carbon has been kept. Dorothy's striking arts and crafts style handwriting is evident in the copy of the scuttling letter, written a few weeks later.

Cancer and Vegetarianism

Cancer then as now is a frightening disease. As well as the pain and disability of the growth it was particularly hard for WEAA to have this illness when the vegetarian diet was supposed to promote health and longevity. The Simple Life home had a specific mission to treat sufferers from chronic ailments arising from 'wrongly arranged food', 'dyspepsia, gout, rheumatism and others.'[1294] WEAA had even delivered a paper to the Vegetarian Federation Union at Bristol in 1896 on *The Increase of cancer – a warning note*.

The whole relationship of vegetarianism to health was a contentious subject. There were conflicts over what should be a vegetarian diet. Different views prevailed within the community on whether dairy, eggs and fish could be included, and the consumer still be counted a vegetarian. The term vegan only arrived in the 1950s, but 'fruitarian' frequently appears in the literature of WEAA's day. These were not light matters. As described, Francis Newman was traumatised by his wife's determination to slip animal products into his invalid meals. Joe Haddow looking back from1940 commented on how little these early vegetarians knew about diet, 'They ate too much starchy food, and bread, butter and jam figured too frequently on the table.'

The other side of the coin was the anger from those who blamed the rigid vegetarian diet for the death of relatives and friends. WEAA revered the philologist and Shakespearean scholar, Frederick James Furnivall (1825-1910), and corresponded with him for nearly forty years. In 1911 he contacted his son Percy for advice on the memorial he was writing for the VS. Percy responded with barely suppressed rage that twenty years of a vegetarian diet had nearly killed his father, 'For more than the last 35 years of his life he was a moderate fish and meat eater, though his digestion never quite recovered from the effects of his vegetarianism.'[1295] He later objected to WEAA's describing his father as 'a vegetarian scholar' in the draft memoir.[1296]

Vegetarian Society Comrades

On 21 January 1912 WEAA suffered the terrible loss of Albert Broadbent 'whom he loved and treated almost like a son.'[1297] WEAA wrote an emotional obituary in the *VM*, finding it hard to come to terms with this death. It is noticeable that WEAA's scholarly activities decline in these weeks.

Albert was the paid secretary and publisher for the VS, married to William Harrison's daughter Christina and father of five children. They lived near WEAA on Plymouth Grove.

WEAA's childhood favourite, *Little Derwent's Breakfast* was published a year after Broadbent's death as number eighteen of the Treasuries series. It includes WEAA's introduction. This must have been a pet project with Broadbent, conscious of WEAA's wish to see this little book again.

An old friend, Elsie Stewart of Barrhead near Glasgow, regretted that the 1912 VS Summer school would not be held at St Andrews because of the high rents and that she, her mother, and sisters might not get to Arnside. She added with the direct honesty with which earlier generations faced death, 'For the sake of your friends I beg you will not speak of another removal which we all believe to be very far off, although as far as you yourself are

concerned it will be the simplest of all – merely the quiet entry into a larger & more joyous room with no worry about material possessions!'[1298]

Mr Green sent WEAA a postcard in August 1912, hoping he might be well enough to join in 'antiquarian exploring' in Liverpool. The postcard was addressed to WEAA's new home at 42 Richmond Grove but redirected to him at the Vegetarian Summer School at Arnside. This was the last he attended.

Supported by Ernest, Geoffrey, and Dorothy as well as friends like Mr Green and the Harrisons, WEAA managed to attend the Vegetarian Exhibition & Carnival at Manchester's Milton Hall on the 28 to 30 November 1912. It was a lively affair. Ernest presided over the Café, Mr Green and Geoffrey ran the Bookstall and Dorothy gave dance performances. The Harrisons were there, Mrs Harrison running cookery demonstrations, whilst Fred Morgan, who had featured at many a social gathering over the years, gave impersonations from Dickens. He seems to have been an elocution teacher, shading into genteel entertainer. Mrs Fred Morgan was assisted by Dorothy and other ladies at the buffet.

WEAA contributed a strong message in the foreword to the souvenir book,[1299] also fully reported in the *VM*. He described the 'ghastly fruit of the shambles', and finished with, 'The Vegetarian Society offers to the Exhibition a practical guidance to a way of life consistent with the teaching of science and the dictates of humanity.'[1300] He managed to preside on 29 November, gave an address and then left early.

In 1913 WEAA sent an ‘affectionate greeting’ and a valedictory poem to the 1913 Summer School at Colwyn Bay. Mottoes from his previous Summer School poems were pinned up each morning in the porch, ‘treasured as much for their helpfulness as for their beauty of phrasing.’ [1301] The absence of ‘the Headmaster and inspirer of so many Summer Schools’ was profoundly regretted.

Pitman Centenary

WEAA had attended the gatherings of phonographic societies for years. In the 1880s he had been president of the Manchester Shorthand Writers’ Association and member of the International Congress and Jubilee of Phonography. He supported the Pitman Centenary in 1913 but was too ill to attend the May celebrations in Bath and London. Despite his suffering, the *Pitman’s Journal* reported that ‘as might be expected, he took a keen interest in the event, and at his own request, was furnished with copies of all the publications issued in connection with it.’[1302]

The Maid of the South Country

WEAA’s last contribution to the *Millgate Monthly* was his poem, *The Maid of the South*

Country, published in September 1913 issue. [1303] Dorothy illustrated this with delightful sketches. Clearly this was a happy collaboration and published in time for WEAA to enjoy seeing it in print. Veronica Boys remembers the illustrated poem and Dorothy's artistic abilities. She recalled her grandmother as a talented woman, creating tapestries and being an enthusiastic interior designer. In later life, Dorothy frequently moved, creating opportunities for more design.

Fairfield

Early in 1913 WEAA had moved into Fairfield, a vegetarian guest house, in the heart of Victoria Park. Fairfield was a huge house in a classical style with a magnificent drawing room, dining room, lounges and an imposing staircase leading up to the floors where the residents had their private rooms. It was in the heart of Victoria Park, at 67 Daisy Bank Road, one of several massive mansions surrounded with gardens, shrubberies, and trees.

Fairfield itself has vanished, but a photograph of the exterior survives in the MCLA archive. This shows Fairfield to be substantially the same as the house opposite, Summerville. This still stands, converted into residential flats with the company's office downstairs. The blue plaque outside commemorates Sir Harry Smith's residence there in 1857 when he was General Officer Commanding Northern District. On enquiry I was invited inside Summerville, a welcome chance to view the restored grandeur. The manager gave me a tour, generously throwing open huge doors to reveal the regimental dining room.

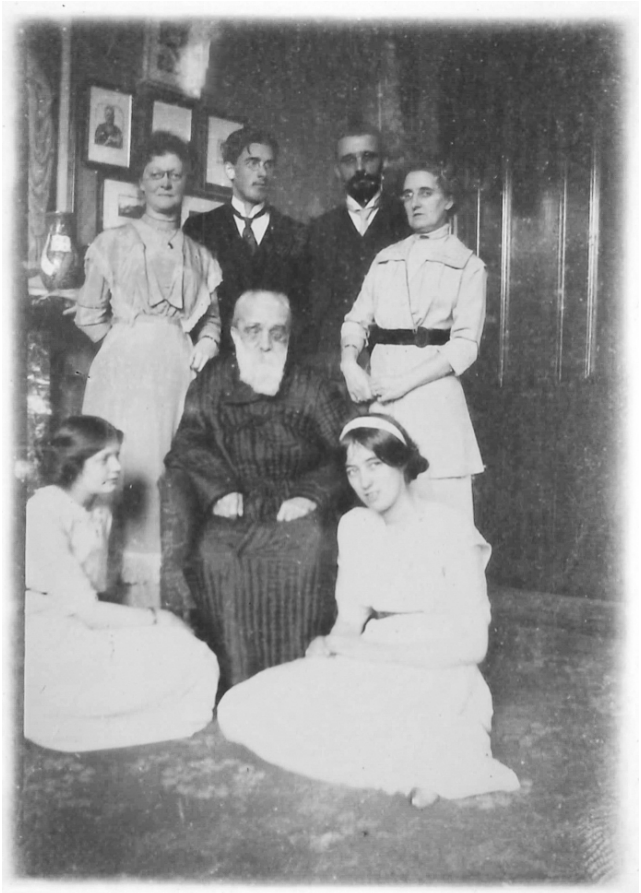
In 1905 Summerville became the Unitarian Home Missionary College. As well as the several friends WEAA had amongst the staff and supporters, he surely would have visited to see the library that he catalogued back in 1875.

Sophie's Visit

The crisis brought WEAA's beloved daughter Sophie back from New Zealand. The New Zealand family still have the blanket she was given to keep her warm on the long voyage. She arrived in the summer of 1913, a few weeks before WEAA had an operation. WEAA and Sophie, always very close, had continued to correspond over the years. The emotional impact of the reunion and inevitable parting must have been intense for both.

Joe described in *We Two* how Mathilde Hompes, now fifty eight, rushed to see Sophie as soon as she reached Manchester, and how they met frequently over the following weeks. At last, there is a description of this loyal family friend, 'She was a teacher by profession, and a clever Linguist. Besides the languages of her parents she read French and Italian. Her English, both spoken and written was excellent. Small in stature, of dark colouring, perfect poise and ample confidence she was conspicuous in any company. Well read and a good but not loquatious talker, she was easy to entertain and a welcome visitor at all times.' Joe remembered how much he and Sophie had relied on her sound advice.

Sophie stayed with Ernest and Julia in their newly built (to their design) house at Heaton Moor: Ernest was busy as responsibility for WEAA's business affairs had fallen on his shoulders. In October Sophie, missing her family and feeling her father might linger for a few more years, returned home. Mrs S G Haddow was recorded as a passenger on the Ruahine, arriving in Wellington on 9 December.



Julia (Ernest's wife), Geoffrey (Ernest's son), Ernest (WEAA's son), Sophie (WEAA's daughter), WEAA, Florence (Ernest and Julia's daughter), Dorothy (WEAA and Setta's daughter)

Operation

In the summer of 1912 WEAA was resigned to undergoing an operation but then an alternative approach was suggested. WEAA wrote to 'My dear Green' on 22 August 1912, concerned he had been unsympathetic in some

advice he had given him but ‘It was really what I thought wisest.’ He then discusses De Quincey matters, and drops this in almost casually at the end, ‘Dr Robert Bell examined me this morning and says there is a growth but it can be cured without an operation. So we’ll try his plan.’ [1304]
According to AFB it was at Fairfield on 9 June 1913 that WEAA underwent the long- delayed operation.[1305]

The news spread gradually. Lawrence Clay wrote to him on 17 July, having just learnt of his illness ‘and its nature.’ He finishes with ‘I believe you know where to turn for strength to endure.’[1306] Meta Gaskell is the most specific, writing with her usual directness on 22 July, ‘I am so shocked to hear how very very ill you have been. An operation of any kind must be a dreadful thing to face and when it is of such a very severe nature as a colotomy, true courage must indeed be needed. But that – and Faith – I know that you have.’[1307]

Post Operation
Joe wrote, ‘The operation gave him relief from pain, but materially reduced his strength; he rallied later and it appeared that his life might be prolonged.’

On 20 August Phillips wrote to WEAA hoping

there was no relapse and that the nursing home was good. On 15 September he was glad that WEAA suffered only weakness and little pain as well as still being interested in writing and in matters like the 'Beard controversy.'[1308]

Remarkably WEAA had managed to send him enclosures about this unexplained matter. Another old friend, Alan Hughes, staying with Phillips in Coniston, expressed relief that WEAA had come through the operation with good results. He then launched into the much more literary chat that would have done WEAA a power of good, the enthralling matter of Dr Johnson, Francis Barber, and WEAA's finding a book that Hughes had been unable to trace.

Even in these last months, WEAA continued to write to his friends on his usual literary, scholarly, and bibliographic matters, albeit having to dictate his letters to Dorothy. Meta Gaskell, herself very ill, never could resist sending him queries, the last was in July. She forwarded a query from Clement Shorter on the date of one of her mother's stories. WEAA as usual sent a fully satisfactory reply. It is a measure of how much he meant to his friends that they did not forget him as he weakened. Even Pollard, having sensitively consulted with Ernest, kept him engaged with *The Library*, sending proofs of WEAA's *Visio Fulberti*. His old colleague, W P Crozier of the

Guardian, also checked with Ernest whether he could contact WEAA to put notes together on Edward Taylor, adding 'only if it helps him.'[1309]
C P Scott had never lost touch with WEAA, commissioning not just *Guardian* pieces but private investigations into family and *Guardian* history. In a letter dated 9 October 1913 he complimented WEAA on 'your excellent notice of Jeremiah Garnett' and assured him that this would be added to the archives. He was glad to hear WEAA was so much better. He also mentioned payment for the notice would be made in the monthly accounts, the last one from the *Guardian* to WEAA.

Some sent WEAA their reminiscences of happy times they had shared. W C Crichton wrote from Perth recalling the Vegetarian Summer Schools at St Andrews and Arnside, sure that 'your amiable and helpful presence' would have been greatly missed at Colwyn Bay.[1310]
Letters in appreciation of specific works continued to arrive as they always had done. George Ward from Bury St Edmunds requested an autographed copy of WEAA's *Vegetarianism and the Intellectual Life*. A C Newcombe, an old friend from the VS, a much-travelled railway

engineer, had sent WEAA photographs and Dorothy postcards from exotic locations in India over the years. He wrote offering the practical gift of a waterbed.

Network of Comfort

WEAA was with friends. It was Mr and Mrs Fred Morgan who ran Fairfield as a vegetarian guest house, their names fortuitously preserved through a court case in 1914. There is a lively account in the *Manchester Courier* of the lady resident who sued them after she had been ejected for not living up to their standards and other misdemeanours.[1311] Like The Simple Life, Fairfield was promulgating a whole lifestyle. There are newspaper reports of anti-vivisectionist garden parties being held in the grounds.

Fred Morgan was a long standing and stalwart member of VS, presumably the same entertainer and elocutionist who gave so many recitations at VS socials. Mrs Fred Morgan contributed a humorous tale, *Mrs. Gabblewell Goes to a Bazaar*, under her maiden name, Esther Hirst, to *The Bazaar*.

After the operation WEAA was attended by professional nurses, one of whom was Nurse Golding. Veronica Boys remembered that 'Nurse Gee', Annie Elizabeth Golding, became a close family friend

and godmother to her own mother Barbara.

F E Hamer, an old Guardian colleague, gave a unique glimpse of WEAA in these last days at Fairfield, quoting him directly:

> '"It has not been an easy life. There have been crosses to bear. But if I had to live it over again, I think I should live it just the same, only I would wish to live it better." There was a serene peace in his mind. His bed had been moved into the large room he used as a library. "So," he said rather pathetically, "I am still among the things I have always loved in life. The moment I open my eyes they rest on beloved objects- my books and those beautiful drawings and pieces of sculpture over the mantlepiece. And I shall die, as I have lived, among the things I have loved." That was my last goodbye to him, and I am glad now that the first thing I did afterwards was to get his old colleagues on the paper to send him a message of greeting, signed by all who had worked with him. He left us with his face towards the light.'[1312]

Amazingly WEAA was still writing. On the afternoon of 25 October, he completed a paper on the poetess Mary Scott, the first John

Taylor's mother. C P Scott admired the piece and asked WEAA if he could keep the manuscript. Ernest thought it worth publishing when he discovered it in 1932.[1313]

Master of Arts

Over the years several friends expressed regret that WEAA had been denied a formal education. The feeling was that had he been able to focus on a university degree and a specific area of study he would have achieved renown as a great scholar. Instead, he had produced a huge quantity of writing on a variety of subjects, in a way a jack of all trades and a master of none. Others refuted this view. His friends Bone and Professor Mayor contended that he had achieved a far higher level of scholarship than those who had an easy and privileged ride to graduation.

WEAA himself had felt the lack of a degree and occasionally wondered how he might achieve it. However, taking a degree was never a realistic proposition and instead he had the joy of formal acknowledgement of his scholarship through becoming a fellow of the RSL and then the miraculous honorary degree from Wilberforce University.

Manchester University had conferred honorary degrees on other Manchester Men, including Charles Sutton, and it was puzzling that WEAA had been overlooked or rejected. Casartelli felt so strongly that he wrote to the *Guardian*: they did not publish his letter. Casartelli was certainly furious, writing this to WEAA on 19 June 1901, 'I cannot refrain from expressing here my surprise & indignation – the word is not too strong – that after all you have done & are doing, for letters in Manchester when you

are without doubt the most prolific & best-known literary man, the Victoria University should have so scandalously passed you over.'[1314]

Perhaps WEAA did not quite fit the mould. He was an ambivalent figure, at one level a respected man of letters, at another level an outsider holding extreme and uncomfortable views. The shadows of his dubious background might have gone deeper than WEAA ever acknowledged.

The first intimation WEAA had of an honorary degree was an informal letter from Professor C H Herford, dated 27 June 1913. Herford was clearly indignant that the University authorities had been so tardy, 'it seemed that this degree, which has been given to Horsfall & other eminent citizens, was more especially appropriate to mark your long connection with Manchester, & your memorable services to Manchester scholarship, journalism, & social work.' [1315] Herford asks him to keep the news confidential. The formal invitation from the Chancellor arrived on 15 July. There was no date yet for the ceremony which WEAA was expected to attend. The degree was a Master of Arts (honoris causa) 'confered from time to time on a few of those who have been engaged in useful public work or have rendered service to Letters or Science in our

city.' As the Chancellor was about to resign and would not be present it is a rather chilly message in comparison to Herford's joyful one.

By late October when the university finally got its act together, WEAA was in the last stages of cancer, too frail even for the short journey along Daisy Bank Lane to the University. Apparently when he had first heard of the plan, WEAA had remarked to a friend with his usual cheery spirit, 'You had better tell these people to hurry up, for I have an appointment I must not miss.'[1316]

In an event which as far as I know remains unique, the university came to him.

The Sunshine of the Day
At noon on Monday, 27 October 1913, some forty men and women assembled at Fairfield House. It was a poignant occasion, the conferring of an honorary degree on a dying man. The ceremony took place in WEAA's large room, his camp bed surrounded by the crowded shelves of his treasured books. Representing the University were Professor Weiss, Professor Herford, Edward Fiddes, and Mr. C. T. Needham, M.P. His tiny body swamped by his new academic robe, WEAA was supported by his son Ernest, his daughter Dorothy and two nurses.

Professor Herford outlined WEAA's roles as an early authority on Lancashire's history, literature and archaeology, his thirty years as a journalist on the *Manchester Guardian*, the range, minuteness, and accuracy of his many

contributions to journals and correspondence columns. Then he focused on the very aspect that now makes WEAA such a rewarding subject for study, ‘Yet the business of the past has never engaged him at the cost of the business of the present and the future.’

Professor Weiss conferred the Master of Arts degree with a handshake. With difficulty and much emotion, WEAA insisted on standing to reply. He recalled his longing as a youth to attend classes at Owens College, later Manchester University. Then, in typical WEAA manner, he dwelt less on this frustration than on the kindness of the librarian, Mr. Nicholson, in allowing him the run of the college library, the inspiration for his study of literature:

> ‘He thought he must have pretty well worn the steps of the then Owens College in Quay Street in examining the calendars and seeing if by chance he could fit in his engagements, which were long and arduous and tedious, with the requirements of the College. But it never was possible. There was one thing, however, which he liked to remember was the benefit he received from the College. In those days, when the College was in Quay Street and he was in the Library in Byrom Street, he was not far from the college, and by the kindness of Mr. Nicholson, he was allowed the run of the

> College library. He remembered still the great satisfaction and the delight which this privilege gave him and the benefit he derived from it.'[1317]

The degree ceremony was widely reported, both locally and nationally. The news and photographs made the front cover of *The Daily Mirror*, 'Manchester University Confers the Degree of M.A. upon Dr. W. E. A. Axon, the Lancashire Antiquarian.' In one of the photographs, it is just possible to distinguish Setta's portrait on the wall.

However belated, the academic recognition comforted WEAA's last weeks. As a contemporary remarked, 'the sunshine of the day remained with him to the end.'[1318]

The Daily Mirror

20 Pages

THE MORNING JOURNAL WITH THE SECOND LARGEST NET SALE.

No. 3,124 Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper. TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1913 One Halfpenny

MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY CONFERS THE DEGREE OF M.A. UPON DR. W. E. A. AXON, THE LANCASHIRE ANTIQUARIAN.

The Last Weeks

Many friends wrote to WEAA to express their pleasure that the long overdue degree had finally been bestowed. A Dr Frederick H Warswick sent a postcard with ‘better late than never.’[1319] Percy Ames of the RSL wrote a generous letter of congratulations. He also promised WEAA to send Miss Selby tickets for future events and noted the address. It speaks volumes that WEAA took care to ensure this pleasure for Miss Selby as his own life faded. The ceremony had been a huge effort for WEAA. The Vice Chancellor F E Weiss wrote hoping the ceremony had not affected his

health and emphasised what a great pleasure and privilege it had been to confer the degree. Ames commiserated that WEAA was now 'limited to two hours a day for your favourite pursuits.'[1320] WEAA was frustrated by the limitation on his reading and writing, 'but almost to the last persisted in doing both.'[1321]

W R Credland, WEAA's old friend and colleague from Campfield days as well as his lodger back in the 1860s, could not attend the ceremony but wrote emotionally of how the university was honoured by WEAA and owed him a huge debt.[1322]

Sadly, WEAA's dear friend Meta Gaskell had died on 26 October after several weeks' illness. She would have rejoiced at the honour finally coming to WEAA. The *Guardian* report of her death noted, 'With her demise that last link of the Gaskell family with Manchester is broken.'[1323] Was this news kept from WEAA on the eve of the degree ceremony and afterwards?

Letters poured in from those who had heard the news of the degree and were shocked to realise the gravity of his illness. Many now wished to be remembered to him. Amongst these were clerics, academics, neighbours, representatives of temperance and vegetarian movements, and individuals who had cause to be grateful to him. A William J Stonestreet from Lytham had not

forgotten his kindness, a Thomas Holt from Higher Broughton hoped the illness was not as serious as the physicians thought, an E Johnstone from Bury called him the Peacemaker, and a new librarian at John Rylands, Julian Peacock, regretted that he was only just getting to know him and added that his father had always admired WEAA's historical work.

The regular correspondents sent in their congratulations. Selby combined hers with lively literary gossip and a swipe at Oliver Lodge, C P Scott with the matter of WEAA's MS on Mary Scott, whilst Henry S Clubb, now in his eighties, wrote from the USA, rather insensitively rejoicing in his own robust health. Casartelli explained sadly that he had not been informed of the ceremony. This hurtful oversight may have been related to the anger he had openly expressed at the neglect of his friend.

Others asked for a photograph, wanted to visit him at Fairfield or even requested that WEAA would subscribe to their books. But WEAA was gradually drifting away from all this.

Ernest takes over
The correspondence shifts from WEAA to Ernest as WEAA slid into unconsciousness.

On 9 November Ivo Sankey sent his message to Ernest, 'If he is conscious tell him my best wishes & prayers are his.'[1324] C P Scott wrote to Ernest of his sadness at WEAA's increasing weakness. and Pollard asked him to give WEAA his love. An affectionate letter arrived from a Mrs Allney Brooke, unaware of the crisis but 'thinking often of old times at the *Guardian*.'[1325] She was greatly upset by Ernest's news in early December that WEAA was now unconscious, telling him in reply of WEAA's kindness to her 'in my early

journalistic days' and his 'touches of humour.' She referred to the report of the degree ceremony, 'I thought his account of his fruitless endeavour to get a more thorough education was most touching.' It is frustrating not to know more this rare woman journalist.

A certificate arrived from the Temperance Society, the last honour of WEAA's lifetime. W R Nicoll, the Editor of *British Weekly*, wrote on 21 November suggesting a collaboration with WEAA on a five-volume history of English Literature in the Victorian period, 'Now there is no one in the country who has so much knowledge of the whole subject as you have.'[1326] He was devastated when Ernest broke the news that WEAA was dying, 'That so precious a life should pass from us with all its great store of accumulated knowledge and wisdom is sad indeed.'[1327]

Casartelli told Ernest that WEAA had proposed him as president of the LCAS, an honour he had to decline. Again, this indicates the care WEAA took in these last days to do what he could for his friends. Casartelli wished there was better news of 'my old and respected friend your father, the pleasure of whose first

acquaintance I owe to my own father long since deceased.'[1328]

Arthur R Scott's letter came too late to amuse WEAA as it surely would have done. He joked about the 'Wreath of Laurel,' bald heads and that 'Dr Axon has such a grand head of hair that he needs no Laurel Wreath to top it.' He also joked about the MLC, 'I guess you are still engaged with all those musty German (sausage) books – so I send you these Annie cuttings as desert.' This letter illuminates WEAA as the immensely curious and humorous character so many loved and had cause to be grateful to. Scott ends with that specific point, 'Heaven send you every comfort and solace in your illness for you have done so much to make others happy.'[1329]

His Passing Away was Serene and Sweet

WEAA died at on Saturday the 27 December 1913 at 1.50 am in the presence of Ernest and Nurse Golding.[1330] Mr Green wrote on the same day to Ernest that 'When I looked at his peaceful face this morning I felt sure that his passing away was serene and sweet.' He had known WEAA for twenty years and had always received 'kindness and encouragement from him.'

The death certificate, dated 29 December, gave WEAA's profession as journalist. Dr W B Pritchard recorded Carcinoma Rectum, fifteen months, and exhaustion as the cause of death.

The next day the body was removed to Ernest's home at 117 St James Road, Heaton Moor. On the 31 December there was a memorial service at 2 pm at the Cross Street Unitarian Chapel, conducted by WEAA's friend, the Rev. O. A. Broadley, minister of the Bible Christian Church, Salford. The Rev. Broadley covered the impact WEAA had on learning, scholarship, and social reform and really went to the heart of WEAA's life with these words, 'That day, he said, they mourned the loss of one who was, he believed, beloved by all. An old philosopher bade them say nothing but good of the dead. He thought it would be difficult to say anything but good of him whose departure had left such a blank in their lives.'[1331]

The internment at 3 o'clock took place at St Paul's Church, Kersal. The Rev. Broadley gave the brief service at the graveside and then as the VS reported 'committed the remains of our friend and leader to the dust.' Amongst the wreaths was one of pink rosebuds and lilies, sent by the Vegetarian Summer Schools as a

token of love for this ‘gentlest and truest of friends.’[1332]

St Paul’s, Kersal Moor

St Paul’s is surrounded with a vast graveyard, overlooking the stretches of Kersal Moor where WEAA, Jane and their children once rambled. The grave is listed in The Manchester Victorian Society’s guide to the graveyard.[1333]

The grave stands close to the eastern wall of the church. WEAA’s name is hard to decipher at the base, the letters deep in the grass. Above him are the names of Jane, Kitty and Sophie’s little daughter Helen Josephine. He is in good company. James Crossley lies in front of the simple Axon grave, and next but one is Phillips’ beloved eldest sister. Joe Haddow’s relatives are also close by. It is a peaceful place of memories, emotive names, stately trees, birdsong, and above all fresh air. WEAA lies peacefully there.

In
Memory of
JANE WOODS,
WIFE OF WILLIAM E.A.AXON.
BORN AT BURNFIELD 6 MAY, 1843.
DIED AT HIGHER BROUGHTON 15 JULY, 1889.
"THERE SHALL BE ONE FOLD."
AND OF
KATHARINE,
THIRD DAUGHTER OF THE ABOVE.
BORN AT ROSHOLME, 2 DEC. 1872.
DIED AT BOWDON, 25 OCT. 1890.
"KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING ENTERETH,
AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH."
AND OF HELEN JOSEPHINE DAUGHTER OF
JOSEPH GEORGE AND SOPHIE HADDOW
AND GRAND DAUGHTER OF WILLIAM E.A. AXON
BORN AT BOWDON APRIL 23RD 1890
AND OF
WILLIAM EDWARD ARMYTAGE
BORN 13 JANUARY 1846

St Paul's Church, Kersal Moor.

Axon Family Grave: Jane Axon, Katharine, Helen Josephine Haddow and WEAA

CHAPTER 35

SUCH STORES OF KNOWLEDGE

Reaction

WEAA's death was followed by a veritable torrent of reports, obituaries, reminiscences, and letters in newspapers, journals, magazines, and publications of various societies. Ernest used Durrant's Press Cuttings Agency, Central Agency, and Temple Press Cutting Offices to ensure nothing was missed.

All these reports were carefully garnered by Ernest and Mr Green, providing the personal glimpses of WEAA's character and appearance that have fed into this biography. Particularly rich sources are the accounts by Phillips, Miss Hompes, and George Milner of their long friendships with WEAA. Azeglio Valgimigli concentrated on his friend WEAA as a scholar, remembering him as a founder of the Bibliographical Society, the LA, and the Manchester Dante Society. He referred to WEAA's learned lecture in 1912 to the Dante Society, *Hebrew Visions of Heaven and Hell,* 'You will find one of his papers in the *Comptes rendus* of the French Academy of Sciences, and another in the *Journal of Theological Studies*, and a third in the *Journal of the International Society of the Apocrypha.* A list of the

periodicals for which he wrote would be too long for quotation.' In addition, Valgimigli cited his studies of Chaucer, William Beckford, and Robert Copland as well as explorations of German, French, Italian, Portuguese and 'even the gypsy literature.'[1334]

Views

Some saw WEAA as a parochial figure, 'Out of Lancashire, where his amiable character and vast erudition have won him a modest fame, he was little known, but he has taken with such stores of knowledge as are possessed by very few, if any, of the living.'[1335] This needs to be balanced with Valgimigli's view, 'The funeral -at which no less than 25 Societies were represented-was an imposing manifestation of the esteem and respect in which the late Scholar was held by all classes of citizens.'

The truth is that most people only knew certain aspects of WEAA's varied life and based their judgements accordingly. Several newspaper reports focused on WEAA's role as 'Pioneer of Sunday opening of Libraries', a campaign that is still associated with him.[1336] It is the full picture that is so fascinating. WEAA's various roles made it difficult to

summarise him. Labels of author, historian, journalist, humanitarian, pamphleteer, antiquary, librarian, and bibliophile were variously applied in the obituaries, along with reference to his being ‘a man of uncommon learning and a poet of no mean powers.’[1337]

To the *Daily News* he was a self-made man and ‘one of the most picturesque figures in Lancashire. He wrote with equal ease and accuracy on the future of Buddhism, the history of Lancashire, bygone Sussex, the dangers of alcohol, the advantages of a vegetarian diet, the ill-effects of smoking, the citizenship of Cobden, and the proficiency which Charles Dickens attained at shorthand.’[1338] The writer concluded WEAA would wish to be best remembered as a Lancashire historian.

The *Westminster Gazette* with whom WEAA had been associated for years best captured the salient points, even referencing his background correctly, ‘He knew the needs and possibilities of the lowly, because he was reared amongst them; and much of a hard-working life was devoted to the furtherance of ideas and movements having for object some

form of social amelioration. This was but one side of the activities of a remarkably diversified character. His memory was phenomenal, his literary and linguistic acquisitions were unusually extensive; as a writer his industry and the range of his subjects were extraordinary.'[1339]

A young friend had been impressed to find the renowned scholar and writer so approachable, charmingly sketching WEAA as he first met him at the Melrose Summer School in 1905. WEAA 'sparkled with friendliness to all men, had pleasure in the sunshine, the bright air, the groups of holiday-making folks.' The writer commented on WEAA's love for a cup of tea, and enjoyed his jest on sipping the boiling brew,'"Hm," he murmured, "the biggest liar couldn't say this was cold." ' Perceptively the writer commented on the steel that underlay WEAA's gentle tolerance. Some 'shallow critics' 'may have thought him tame' but the writer twice encountered a flash of anger from WEAA, once when he defended theatrical bars and once when he questioned the worth of 'bookishness.'[1340]

Temperance

WEAA had written for temperance causes and

organisations for years, but many of his pieces are anonymous or hard to trace. Even as late as 1900 he was able to startle readers with his hard hitting and unexpected approaches. *Drink and Death* is a very effective 'pictorial tract' WEAA produced for the British Temperance League, a comparative mortality table based on occupations. Brewers, publicans, and beer-dealers come off worst.[1341]

The obituaries brought more of his articles to light. *The British Temperance Advocate* highlighted the series he wrote in the *Guardian* after investigating Mrs. Lewis' Teetotal Mission in Blackburn in 1886. WEAA's concluding words are quoted, 'If anyone thinks this report of the social results of Temperance is exaggerated let him inquire, as I have done, and he will find I have not told one quarter of what may be seen and heard in Blackburn.'[1342] It is rare to find such a direct example of WEAA's work as an investigative journalist. The Manchester, Salford and District Temperance Union celebrated how he fulfilled his promise to be a working President, including the new information that he edited the *Temperance Star* 'throughout its career.'[1343] The various temperance and

vegetarian organisations sound an unusual emotional tone in their grief at WEAA's passing.

Lasting Value?

One cutting from the *Sheffield Independent* was unexpectedly unpleasant, with its sneer at the manner of his death:

> 'In the life-story of Dr. Axon, it is recorded that "his interests were extremely varied. He was a prominent member of the Anti-Tobacco League, and was also an ardent vegetarian." Yet he died from an internal complaint. We can imagine some cynical old devotee of beef steak as of My Lady Nicotine remarking that no worse fate could have overtaken him if he had enjoyed life!'[1344]

VS members were vulnerable to such jeers when diet and longevity were their mantra.

Others could not cope with the diverse volume of all WEAA's activities. It was the old refrain that a university education would have prevented him from being a jack-of-all-trades as a writer. The *Yorkshire Post* praised him affectionately, especially for his social mission work: in his last years he had been one of their

stable. But even so:

> ‘His memory was phenomenal, his literary and linguistic acquisitions were unusually extensive: as a writer his industry and the range of his subjects were alike appalling. It was this very versatility which stood him somewhat in evil case, for it prevented him from concentrating upon some piece of work which, had the required time and labour been devoted thereto, could not have failed to be a masterpiece and a lasting monument.’[1345]

Even when praising his work, some assessed it as unlikely to have lasting value. ‘Most of them were ephemeral, and even those that still survive -“Lancashire Gleanings,” and “Annals of Manchester” among them – hardly possess more than a limited and local interest.’[1346] The writer in *Pitman’s Journal* was more percipient in identifying the significance of *Annals*, *Cobden as Citizen*, and *Manchester Town Hall.*

International Brotherhood

Letters to newspaper editors highlighted aspects that had been neglected by the main reporting. Very few of the obituaries that

poured out after WEAA's death picked up his connections with the abolitionists, the African American network, or peace movements, merely noting his honorary degree from Wilberforce University without recognising the unique context of the honour. Walter Butterworth wrote to the *Guardian* to remind readers of WEAA's role as president and then vice president of the Manchester International Brotherhood, 'His linguistic acquirements enabled him to be helpful to members of different nationalities, and his well-known love of international peace found expression in addresses which he gave to the Society, whose members desire through me to pay a tribute to his, thoughtful, and sympathetic nature'.[1347] WEAA had kept the flame alive.

Unitarian Debate

There were debates too over WEAA's church allegiance, trying to pin him down as he would not be pinned down in his own lifetime. The consensus was that 'as far as his religious views were known', he was a Unitarian.[1348] His bookseller friend, Charles Higham had described WEAA as a member of the Bible Christian Church but learning he was not, wrote to the *Morning Light* to clarify this.

WEAA was not apparently ever a member of the Bible Christian Church although closely associated with it and his funeral conducted by its minister. Higham then cited a summary from the *Manchester City News*, 'He was a Unitarian by profession, often worshipping with the Quakers, and profoundly versed in the history, theology, and traditions of the most ancient of all Christian Churches; and it seemed all of a piece of his life that he should be on occasion a welcome figure in Free Church pulpits, and have happily married a Catholic lady.'[1349]

Drama

Amusingly WEAA was described by a *Guardian* correspondent as coquetting with drama in a collaboration with 'the late E. Romaine Callender, a somewhat robustious actor.'[1350] This elicited a response from the real author, and as he pointed out, the very much alive E Romaine Callender, that he alone wrote the play and WEAA probably never even saw it. The dispute triggered a very valuable recollection from the actor, otherwise unidentified as WEAA's friend. Interestingly he addressed the letter from Southport:

> 'For forty years Dr. Axon was the dearest

> and best friend I ever had. He possessed a most lovable nature, and was the mildest man I ever met. How two such dissimilar natures could have cultivated such a warm friendship was a mystery to many. I have often wondered at it myself. The strongest phase of his character was his charity towards all men ; he was called “a faddist,” “crank,” but the fact was he thought strongly on most subjects, but, unlike most earnest men, he possessed a keen sense of humour which saved him from trying to rule other people’s lives by his own. He never gave advice unasked, he pursued his own course in what he considered was the right path, irrespective of what people thought or said. There is no means of estimating the amount of good or influence that the lives of such men have on others.’ [1351]

As mentioned previously, I suspect the E. R. C. who produced the slightly tongue-in-cheek biographical article for WEAA in 1879 was none other than E. Romaine Callender.[1352] It is possible they met through the MLC: WEAA was a member for forty years, the time frame Callender mentions for their friendship.

Christmas Gifts

The *Co-operative Newspaper* staff were saddened by the absence of his usual Christmas gift:

> ‘Mr Axon was a versifier of no mean order, and it was his custom at Christmas time to send to his friends instead of the conventional card or greeting a booklet of his own verse, or a compilation from the lyrics of various nations, many of them translated by himself into English. Mr Axon was an expert linguist. For the first time for many years the editorial table at the “News Office” is minus Mr Axon’s Christmas reminder, and this will be missed by the many friends whom he delighted to remember in this way at this season of the year.’[1353]

Poetry, friendship, and sharing the pleasures of a happy season are good ways to think of WEAA. Others too sent his booklets of verse to friends instead of Christmas cards: there are some mentions of this in AP.

Condolence Letters and Tributes

Letters poured in too from shocked friends. Some had not been in touch for years and were grieved to hear the news, offering their own recollections.

Paul Elmer More, editor at *The Nation* had written to WEAA on 31 December, rejecting

his article on Elizabethan preachers on the grounds, 'The long quotations would make heavy reading.' Hastily, hearing WEAA had died, he followed this up with a letter to Ernest that he was sorry to learn the news, and that WEAA he had been greatly valued by *The Nation* and would be missed by many readers.[1354]

William and Sarah Scarborough were devastated by WEAA's death for they had not heard of his final illness. Scarborough wrote to Ernest that they had sent the usual Christmas greeting, 'little knowing that the great soul that would have welcomed it had just passed to the Beyond. His loss we keenly feel, as we have so long known and loved him, and have felt a very personal interest in all that pertained to his home, family, achievements, and his sorrow.'[1355]

John Ballinger of the National Library of Wales was equally upset to read of WEAA's death in the *Guardian.* He and his wife had just sent off a delayed Christmas greeting. Ballinger described to Ernest how they had been friends with WEAA for years, through the LA and mutual interests. They had

corresponded extensively and appreciated the gifts of Welsh books and literary items WEAA had made to Cardiff Public Library and the National Library of Wales. Ballinger was overwhelmed by the loss of his friend, 'I shall always treasure the memory of his sweet, kindly nature, so great in his ideals and his learning, and yet so modest.'[1356]

W R Credland was grief stricken at his friend's death. He wrote to Ernest on behalf of the MLC and did not attempt to stop the official sympathy line being drowned under emotion. 'With us this is not a perfunctory duty but an outflow from our hearts.' Credland described WEAA's influence on them all, his charm and worth, and the impossibility of listing all he had done for them in nearly forty years. He added the news that MLC 'cherished the intention of offering him its Presidentship.'[1357] There could be no higher honour for a Manchester Man.

J T Freeth, secretary to the General Conference of the New Church, wrote for permission to include WEAA's hymn in their New Church Hymn Book supplement. Ernest has added a note of the title, *For the blue sky*

spread above.[1358] Several of WEAA's poems and translations were set to music with his permission and his occasional collaboration but this is the first specific hymn I have found.

The MLC recorded the presentation of a water colour portrait of WEAA: it was given by a member, Thomas Kay. He was presumably the actual artist as his illustrations had previously featured in the *Manchester Quarterly*. Another member, Abraham Stansfield, recalled a MLC poem penned to WEAA:

> 'A man of modest size, and middle age,
> (From out the "middle ages" come, to see
> What this much boasted age of ours may be!)
> With flowing beard and glittering eye, whose rage
> Is still to turn o'er some quaint-lettered page:
> Deep in the ancients, you shall see him pore—
> A pensive statue 'mid the city's roar—
> Whilst you are passing on your pilgrimage,
> A man of learning, cold, impassive? No;
> By nature gentle: tender still, his heart
> Hath pleasant places, where the sweet herbs grow ,
> Of Love and Friendship, and all herbs of grace! .
> A poet he, nor wanting in the art,
> Whom all must Jove that look upon his face!'[1359]

A fitting tribute came from the Manchester and Salford Temperance Association, one of WEAA's most beloved societies. They set up an Axon Fellowship at Milton Hall in his memory,

‘The Fellowship is designed to be a rallying-point for social workers. Meetings will be held in the Milton Hall on the first Thursday in the month.’[1360]

Last Will and Testament

The last will was signed on 4 July 1913, a few weeks after WEAA’s operation. Nurse Annie Elizabeth Golding was one of the witnesses. WEAA’s will was simple. Ernest was appointed executor, trustee, and Dorothy’s guardian. The funds under Ernest’s control were to provide for Dorothy until she reached twenty-one. The residual was then to be divided between Ernest, Sophie, and Rosie’s two children. Ernest as executor was empowered to distribute WEAA’s possessions ‘at his absolute and uncontrolled discretion.’ WEAA’s list rather endearingly contains tools and trowels as well as pictures, paintings, engravings, curios, books, and furniture. Tools and trowels are precious to gardeners. Ernest was directed to distribute all his worldly goods, including the precious books, ‘amongst my relatives and friends and amongst such institutions or societies as he may think fit.’

It is comforting that despite his initial worries when he was retired from the *Guardian*, WEAA had accumulated substantial savings. Presumably these included the realisation of the life insurance that had burdened him. If the policy arranged with Arthur Reade remained unchanged this would have yielded £500. There are other AP letters mentioning different policies: WEAA seems to have taken up one with Joseph Knight, a VS colleague. His estate was valued as gross £1,354, net £1,054. Ernest was the executor. £1,054

amounts to around £125,000 in today's money.

Books and Broadsides
WEAA had been troubled about the fate of his books. There are several AP letters indicating that he had sold some of these after Setta's death, perhaps to raise funds or more likely to reduce the size of his collection.

As mentioned previously, the collection of broadsides that Geoffrey gave to LCAS and then passed to Chetham's, may well have had WEAA's collection at its core.

In 1904 WEAA referred to his collection of Italian broadsides, all printed by Salani in Florence.[1361] There were hundreds of these, and according to the BL catalogue record, they were given to BML, 'The British Library has a collection of broadsides, formed by WEAA. This article is included. See under "A Collection of Broadsides, chiefly of a religious nature and in verse, formed by W. E. A. Axon."'[1362]

WEAA had always been generous in his donations of books, not just his own, to friends and libraries. Ernest followed his instructions and WEAA's books can be found in his favourite libraries from St Andrews down to Chetham's. Letters indicate that Ernest also took care to send favourites to family members.

Jumble of Papers
As a true bibliophile should, WEAA died as he had lived in the middle of literary projects and investigations. There is a whole muddle of

papers in AP, collected in supplementary boxes and folders. Some are typed with pencilled notes and crossings out, others handwritten. However much his body failed, WEAA's mind shone as brightly as ever. There are scraps relating to a BM MS *Cerdd y Blottyn Du. Gan Sampson Edwards*,[1363] a North Country song sent to him by a G.G. Greenwell, which would be of interest today,[1364] an old cutting of his published translation into French of *Hints of the Formation of Small Libraries*,[1365] a proof copy of *The Blood Accusation Against the Jews*.[1366]
There is a partial draft of his *Westminster Review* paper, *Cobden, Civilisation and Commerce.* [1367] Another draft, *A Footnote to Dante: The Story of Gianni Schicchi (Inferno, xxx 31-45*) has an interesting twist as WEAA compares Dante's tale with a variant treatment by Charles Lever.[1368] His draft of *George Meredith's Suppressed Poems* may have been intended for *The Nation.*[1369]

Then there is *A Sermon in the Days of Good Queen Bess* with a note that it had been declined by *The Nation*. It also has the Fairfield address scribbled on the front page: testimony of how WEAA kept working to the end. It is a

lively piece with humorous musing at how modern listeners, used to five minutes 'sermonettes,' would be shocked by sermons lasting hours.[1370]

The proof copy of *Jacques Callot* has a note this is from *St James Magazine*. It is entertaining and readable, with WEAA's usual talent for making time and place vivid. It is also relevant for understanding WEAA's perspective on art, the moral as well as visual and technical, 'Pity it that he should have viewed the darker side of humanity, to the exclusion of the tenderness and solemnity of Mother Nature.' Ever the professional, WEAA has axed further lines on this theme.

Liber Memoralis Caleostro shows WEAA's mode of working from translated extracts: these are very much the first draft notes on a very old favourite, the charlatan Cagliostro.[1371] The next paper in the box, *Day Fatalities,* is in Dorothy's beautiful handwriting, using WEAA's shorthand codes for common words. This is an entertaining read, light in touch and neatly capturing the stubborn character of John Gibbon, the 'unfortunate poet' and ancestor of Gibbon of *Decline and Fall*. WEAA

had not lost his fascination with curious superstitions.[1372]

The proof copy of *Jeremiah Garnett* is next: this was written at C P Scott's request and is a very clear, professional paper. WEAA has added only a few amendments to the proof.[1373] Finally, and perhaps WEAA was working on this with wry humour, there is a typed paper on *An Amulet or Preservative against in Sickness and Death*. The amulet was a seventeenth century book written by Abraham Man. WEAA concludes, 'Let us hope that in times of sickness and the article of death that Abraham Man found the amulet he had prepared for the use of others of services to himself.'[1374] The paper was published as the main article in *N&Q* on 31 December 1910.

In exploring the same boxes, Bob Forrest discovered an echo of WEAA's fascination with Omar Khayyam. There is an envelope of WEAA's unfinished poems, including this verse, written in imitation of FitzGerald's style. It is scribbled on the back of a 1909 note from Albert Broadbent, attached to an advertisement for a VS Summer School:

'Eternity- a wondrous word a faire
Nor though nor I its secrets can declare
Behind [the] curtain talk of thee and me;
The Curtain falls – nor thou nor I are there.'[1375]

MCLA Miscellaneous

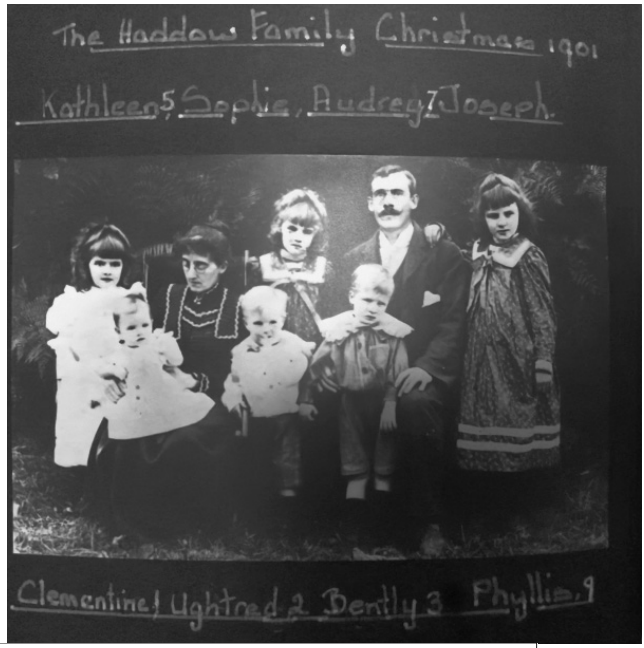
The newspaper cuttings of *The Round of the Clock in Manchester* and the scrapbook entitled *Artizan Naturalists and Mathematcians* [sic] *of Lancashire Wm E.A.Axon 1878* in MCLA suggest WEAA had plans to develop these into books. Various boxes of WEAA pamphlets at MCLA also contain items that presumably were owned by WEAA and were later have been donated by Ernest or Geoffrey. Some of these suggest topics WEAA was contemplating for future investigation, others are related to his various activities and interests. Although no longer active in the Manchester & Salford Sanitary Association he had a copy of their proceedings, *Conference on the Care of the Feeble-minded*, held 4 May 1911. There are other pamphlets on the social crisis in England (1871), Andrew Carnegie's address at the Palace of Peace in the Hague, 29 August 1913, the building of Detroit, a vacation tour of Switzerland and Bavaria, the Rochdale controversies of 1862, and most interesting, a collection of material on Thomas Chatterton and a typewritten copy of the Rev. Francis Beardsall's diary.

An Axon Treasury

WEAA's grandson, Geoffrey Axon, ensured

that a new edition of his poetry collection *An Axon Treasury, Verses Original and Translated,* was published in 1914. This affectionate selection contains some of WEAA's best loved poems as well as those the family would have known marked key points in his life like *Courtin' Toime* and the one originally illustrated by Dorothy, *The Maid of the South Countrie*. There is also a poem from the fifteenth century Persian poet Kasim al Anwar. His very last poem A *Vegetarian Summer School Poem* was included. As editor of the *VM* from 1924 to 1929, Geoffrey reprinted two of WEAA's *VM* poems, *The Vegetarian Life* and *New Year's Day*.

Family New Zealand



Back left - Kathleen, Sophie Clementine (Clem) being held by Sophie, Henry Ughtred (Ugh), Audrey, Humphrey Bently (Ben), Joseph (J.G.)

The neglected baby had grown up to found dynasties. Sophie and Joe's first daughter Helen Josephine had died in Manchester in 1891, but in New Zealand they went on to have eleven more children of whom nine survived, seven girls and two boys. Six of the girls and one boy went on to tertiary education. Suzie Haddow commented, 'I think this was one of the influences Axon, via Sophie, had on the family.' One of the daughters, Phyllis Haddow, achieved fame

through her courage and dedication as a doctor in WW2.[1376]

Sophie's son, Henry William Ughtred, whose brilliant antiquarian name was derived from her reading of Anglo-Saxon kings during pregnancy, married Pansy Middleton, and were the keepers of the precious *We Two*. Their son, George Haddow, and his daughter Suzie Haddow have been a key source for this biography. On first contact Suzie told me that of course the family were very proud of WEAA, adding 'I had always been impressed by Axon's political views. In 1981 I received a broken shoulder blade from a police baton when I was one of the protestors against the Springbok rugby team touring NZ.' Kim Green's mother was Ughtred and Pansy's daughter, Phyllis Dorothy Haddow. She very kindly allowed me to use *We Two.* The family agreed to make a copy available with the Axon Papers at JRL.

WEAA's daughter Rosie and her husband Darius Day had two children, Clifford and Olive. Clifford's daughter Beryl Moreen and her daughter, Christine Strichen, contacted me with family information.

Pam Russell is Suzie's second cousin, and a great deal of family history has been preserved

by her family, including a letter dated 25 June 1971 from Hilda Lytham, librarian at Chetham's, with background details for WEAA, Ernest and Geoffrey. Pam commented on my research, 'I am not sure about Suzie's line but within the descendants of Sophie there are very few, if any teetotallers or vegetarians. There are a lot of sheep and beef farmers and whiskey drinkers! However, they are also quite voracious readers.'[1377]

In 2019 Carey King, Ughtred's granddaughter visited cousins at Ngamatatpouri, where Sophie and Joe's farm, now amalgamated with others, is run by their great grandson Henry Matthews:

> 'There on the steep rugged land that was cleared for farming by Joseph (and Sophie) Henry is running a very successful Manuka honey business- called Settler's Honey in honour of Sophie and Joseph Haddow. And unbeknown to us, our cousin Henry now has a young son – and you could have knocked us all down with a feather when we were told his name is Axon!'[1378]

Family Descendants UK

In 1939 Sophie and Jo returned to the UK to visit their surviving relatives. Ernest had moved to Buxton in 1919, retired in 1932, and was married for a third time to Dora McLardy, a MCL librarian. Geoffrey was still representing the Axon library tradition at MCL. Geoffrey and his wife Mabel had a son Keith who in turn had two

sons, Roger, and Peter. Roger Axon, WEAA's great great grandson, married Avril Haynes, and together with their daughter Rachael Axon-Waters have provided extensive material for this biography.

After her father's death Dorothy lived with Ernest and Julia. She married Ernest's friend Lennard Aston in 1915. Veronica Boys thought this was at Ernest's prompting, but that Lennard adored her. She also believes Dorothy's marriage was sensible as being half German at the start of WW1 could have been difficult. Dorothy and Lennard had two children, Peter, and Barbara. Barbara's daughter Veronica Boys has been my chief informant from this side of the family. I was also honoured to be in contact with her Uncle Peter Aston, WEAA's grandson, who died in 2020.

When WEAA died, the Axon family were still in touch with their Armytage relatives, now generally spelt as Armitage. Ernest's cousin wrote to him from her West Gorton address, thanking him for the half dozen books, presumably WEAA's works, that he had sent as a memorial. She had distributed these to Lucy, her Aunt Sarah, and enclosed six addresses from Lucy for Armitages who would also like one.[1379] These addresses cover Canada, New York, Scotland, London, Liverpool and the Mumps, Oldham. Somewhere amongst all these far-flung relatives might be a clue to what happened to the adventurous Edward Armytage.

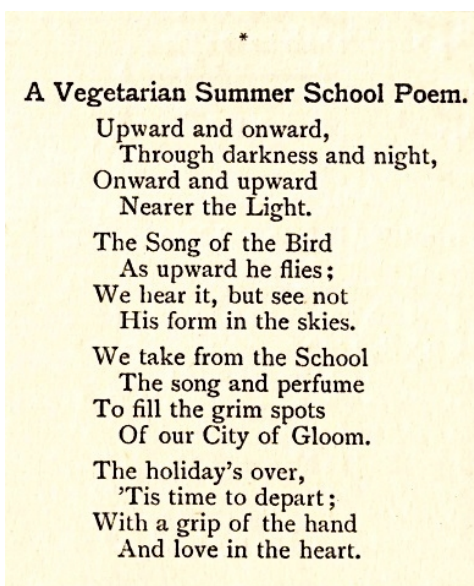
Axons

WEAA, the man renowned for his kindness, was rescued as a neglected baby by the kindness of the three young daughters of the Axon family. Without Maria, Charlotte, and Elizabeth there would

not have been a WEAA. WEAA's adopted brother, Albert and his wife Mary Ann had seven children, most living in the Broughton area of Salford. Cara Baker is descended directly from their son Aloysius. Over the years contact has been lost with WEAA's own family but his memory and the legend of the tree planting in Philadelphia persist.

Valedictory Verse

In his valedictory verse for the VS Colwyn Bay Summer School WEAA conjured up the wistful feelings of the end of a holiday, consoled with the memories of a happy time of comradeship, conversation, and goodwill. [1380] Too ill to attend himself, knowing he was approaching the end, the verses, written on 30 August 1913, sound his brave farewell to all he loved. Geoffrey included this in *An Axon Treasury*, understanding the poignancy. The last word should be left to WEAA



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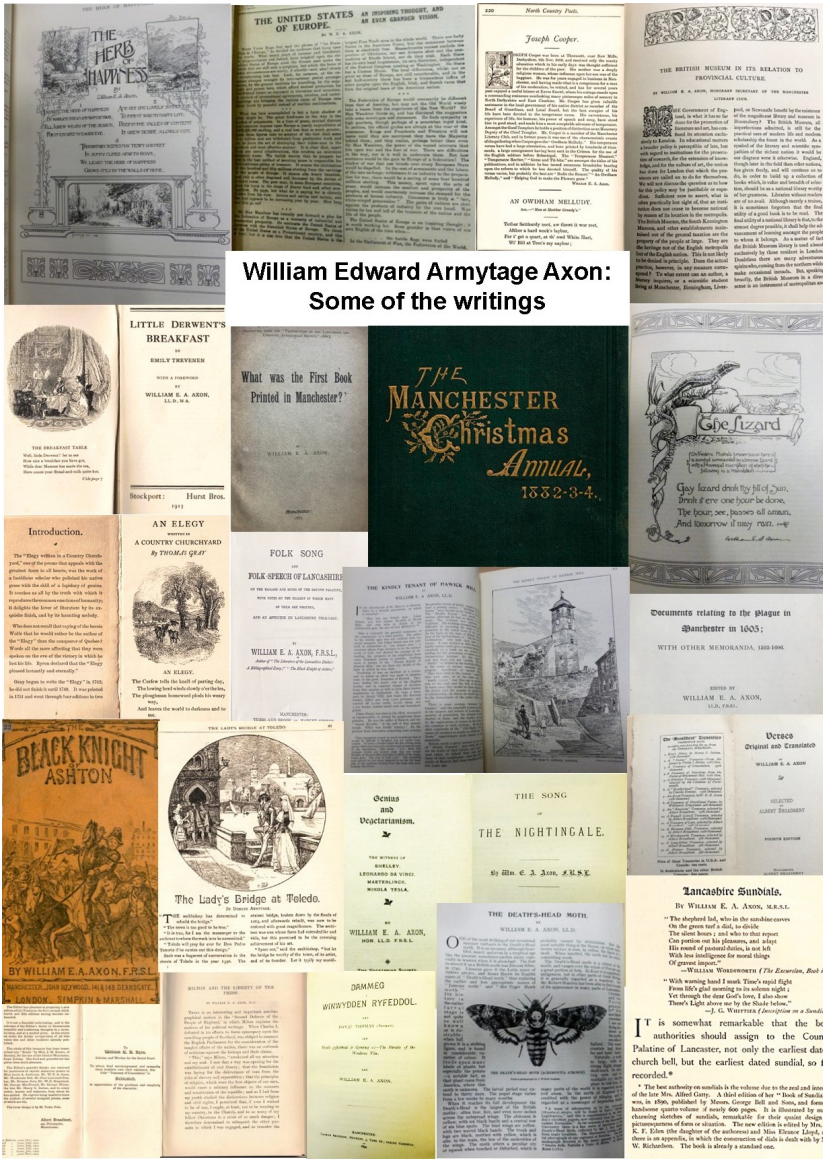
A Vegetarian Summer School Poem.

Upward and onward,
Through darkness and night,
Onward and upward
Nearer the Light.

The Song of the Bird
As upward he flies;
We hear it, but see not
His form in the skies.

We take from the School
The song and perfume
To fill the grim spots
Of our City of Gloom.

The holiday's over,
'Tis time to depart;
With a grip of the hand
And love in the heart.



APPENDIX: WILLIAM EDWARD ARMYTAGE AXON: 'SOME OF THE WRITINGS'

WEAA's friends agreed that it would be impossible to produce a comprehensive bibliography, so many items being

anonymous, unindexed, or buried in unknown sources. Some items appear under his pseudonyms and abbreviations, such as Dudley Armytage, Edward Armytage, Goldpen, A Manchester Pythagorean, WEAA etc. There is also so much! Altogether he produced hundreds of articles and newspaper pieces: I estimate around 600 in *Notes & Queries*, 12 for the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, 18 for the Royal Society of Literature, 29 in *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, and 250 in the *Vegetarian Messenger*. Then there are 'the numerous papers read by him before the Club.'[1381] This is MLC and the papers in their various publications include at least ten major articles, several poems and bibliographies.

Following Sutton's approach in collating 'some of the writings' in 1878, I have omitted 'minor pamphlets and articles.'[1382] This select bibliography of his key works is arranged in broad categories of books, dialect stories and poems, poetry, journals edited, pamphlets (usually 32 pages or less), and articles not reprinted as pamphlets. Items are in year and then alphabetical order within the categories.

I have only provided minimal bibliographic description, just sufficient to track down a specific item. Apart from a few examples, I have not given the full history of WEAA's pieces that evolved variously as talks, articles, pamphlets, or essays collected in books.

For those who might like to hunt further I have listed journals and newspapers where his articles, both named and unnamed, appeared. There will be more sources and articles to discover. As WEAA wrote, 'Old and obscure periodicals are something of a Tom Tiddler's ground where amidst rubbish heaps there are occasional pieces of gold and silver of literature to be picked up.'[1383]

Subjects

A fellow member of WEAA's beloved Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, commented, 'An "Axon Bibliography," if it could it be compiled, would be necessary to display the wide range of his interests.'[1384]

Back in 2012 the Periodicals Online Database for 'W E A Axon' yielded forty-one journals totalling 409 articles, most authored by him and some about him. The journals covered a wide spread. Literature produced 157, Humanities 107, Social Affairs 61, History 47, Archaeology 42, Architecture 16, Political Science 10, Applied Arts 7, Fine Arts 7, Library/Information Science 6, Linguistics/ Philology 4,
Music 4, Religion/Theology 3, Business Management 1, Folklore 1, and History (The Americas) 1.

CATEGORY ONE: BOOKS: WEAA AS AUTHOR OR EDITOR

The Gambler's Daughter or, John Dudley's

Secret, *Co-operative News,* 1865
[Fiction: The *Co-operative News* noted after WEAA's death that they published this serial story when WEAA was only nineteen. In 1895 it was published by Onward under WEAA's pseudonym, Edward Armytage.]
The Black Knight of Ashton, Being an account of a Visit to Ashton-under-Lyne to witness the annual ceremony of Riding the Black Lad, pub. John Heywood, 1870 [Some parts in dialect]
Folk Song and Folk Speech of Lancashire. On the Ballads and Songs of the County Palatine, with notes on the dialect in which many of them are written, with an Appendix on Lancashire Folklore, pub. Tubbs, 1870
The Name of God in 405 Languages, pub. Trübner, 1870
Mother Shipton: A Collection of the Earliest Editions of Her Prophecies, pub. Heywood [1874 likely date]
Genealogy of the Pilkingtons of Lancashire… **Compiled by the late John Harland, edited by William E.A. Axon**, privately printed, 1875
The Mechanic's Friend: a Collection of Receipts and Practical Suggestions…

With..Diagrans and Woodcuts, **Edited by William E. A. Axon**, pub. Trübner, 1875
Bibliography of Lancashire and Cheshire publications issued in the two counties in 1876, pub. Abel Heywood, 1876
The Round of the Clock in Manchester, Twenty-four articles in the *Manchester Weekly Post*, 1876 [Notes on copy in Manchester Central Library indicate these were intended to be reprinted as a book]
Guide to the New Town Hall, pub. Tubbs, 1877
Handbook of the Public Libraries of Manchester and Salford, pub. Abel Heywood, 1877
An Architectural and General Description of the Town Hall, Manchester. To which is added a Report of the Inaugural Proceedings, September 1877, pub. Abel Heywood, 1878
Nixon's Cheshire Prophecies reprinted and edited from the best sources, and including a copy of the prophecy from an unpublished manuscript, with an introductory essay on popular prophecies **by WEAA**, ***and an Appendix containing the Legend of Alderley Edge***, pub. Abel Heywood, 1878 [2nd ed. Revised]

Treatyse on Fyshnge with an Angle, WEAA editor, pub. John Heywood, 1880 [Critical introduction and notes by WEAA: Apparently never issued]

Guide to Manchester, its Public Buildings, Places of Resort &c., &c., pub.Abel Heywood, c 1880 [Abel Heywood's Penny Guides series. Anonymous but ascribed to WEAA]

Pocket Guide to Blackpool and Fleetwood, *pub. John Heywood, c 1880 [anonymous but almost certainly by WEAA]*

Mother Shipton: A Collection of the Earliest Editions of Her Prophecies with an introduction, pub. Abel Heywood, 1882

The Barber's Shop by Richard Wright Procter, illustrated by Wiliam Morton, Revised and Enlarged with an Introduction by William E.A. Axon, pub. Abel Heywood, 1883

Caxton's Game and Playe of the Chesse, 1474. A Verbatim Reprint of the First Edition. By Jacobus de Cessolis with an Introduction by William E.A. Axon, pub. Elliot Stock, 1883

English Dialect Words of the Eighteenth Century as shown in the 'Universal Etymological Dictionary' of Nathaniel Bailey, Edited with an Introduction by William E.A.

Axon, pub. Trübner for English Dialect Society, 1883
How to Succeed in the World: a Manual for Young Men by Dudley Armytage, pub. Tubbs, Brook and Chrystal, 1883
Lancashire Gleanings, pub. Tubbs, 1883
Rambling Sketches, Drawn by T.Raffles Davison, With notes by William E. A. Axon, pub. *The British Architect, 1883*
Cheshire Gleanings, pub. Tubbs, Brook & Chrystal, 1884
The Annals of Manchester: a Chronological Record from the Earliest Times to the End of 1885, pub. John Heywood, 1886
A Gossip about Old Manchester with Illustrations, pub. Abel Heywood, 1887
[Based on 'lectures frequently delivered to popular audiences': Also entitled 'A Gossip about Old Manchester Streets']
Manchester a Hundred Years Ago: being a reprint of A Description of Manchester by a native of the Town, James Ogden, published in 1783. Edited with an Introduction, by William E.A. Axon, pub. John Heywood, 1887
Stray Chapters in Literature, Folk-Lore, and Archaeology, pub. John Heywood, 1888
Manchester Vegetarian Lectures. First Series.:

Delivered in the Brotherton Hall, Manchester, during February to May, 1887, pub. Vegetarian Society, 1888 [Edited with a Preface by WEAA]
Essays in Literature and Ethics: William Anderson O'Conor, Edited with a Biographical Introduction by W.E.A. Azon, pub. Cornish, 1889
General Index to the Remains, Historical and Literary published by the Chetham Society, vols 31-114, pub. Chetham Society, 1889
William Lloyd Garrison: the Story of a Noble Life, pub. Onward, 1890
The Collected Sermons of Thomas Fuller, D.D., 1631-1659, Edited by John Eglington Bailey; completed by W.E. Axon, pub. Fisher Unwin, 1891
The Tenants of Johnson's Court and Other Tales, Janet Armytage, edited by William E.A. Axon, pub. Onward, 1891
Miscellanies 1876-87, pub. English Dialect Society, 1896 [Edited by WEAA: Various English Dialect Society Authors, including WEAA]
Bygone Sussex, pub. William Andrews, 1896
Echoes of Old Lancashire pub. William Andrews, 1899

William Harrison Ainsworth: a Memoir… With Portraits, pub. Gibbings, 1902
Cobden as a Citizen: a Chapter in Manchester History: a Facsimile of Cobden's Pamphlet 'Incorporate Your Borough'; with an Introduction recording his career as a municipal reformer and a Cobden bibliography by William E.A. Axon, pub. Fisher Unwin, 1907
A History of the Bible Christian Church Salford: from 1809 to 1909: Centenary Souvenir, pub. Bible Christian Church, 1909
The Bazaar: Pictures, Poetry, Prose, **Edited by William E.A. Axon; art editors Frederick Garnett, William Canning,** pub. for the Bazaar by Taylor, 1912 [WEAA also contributed the Preface, an article 'Lament for a Youthful Mirmillo', and the closing poem 'Contrasts']

CATEGORY TWO: BOOKS: WEAA AS CONTRIBUTOR

County Dialects: Lancashire, *in* ***A Bibliographical List of the Works that have been published…*** eds. Skeat and Nodal, pub. English Dialect Society, 1877 [WEAA also provided the Index]
The Spanish Poetry of South America, in

The Land of Bolivar, James M. Spence, Volume 2, pub. Sampson Low, 1878
Provision of Cheap Meals for School Children: Report of a Conference at the Brotherton Hall, 5, Fountain Street, Manchester, on April 2nd, 1887, ***in Cheap Dinners for School Children and the Economy of Our Food Supply Report of Two Conferences Held in Manchester***, pub. Vegetarian Society, 1887
Lancashire Sundials, and Poems of Lancashire Places in ***Bygone Lancashire,*** Ernest Axon ed., pub. Andrews, 1892
Samuel Slater, the Father of the American Cotton Manufacture, in ***Bygone Derbyshire,*** William Andrews ed., pub Andrews, 1892
St. Wulfstan: a Warwickshire Saint, in ***Bygone Warwickshire,*** William Andrews ed., pub. Andrews, 1893
'To students and lovers of books', in ***The Book-Lover's Enchiridion,*** Alexander Ireland ed, pub. Macmillan, 1894 [Extract from 'Free Public Libraries', *Meliora*, October 1867]
Shorthand in Church, in ***Curious Church Customs***, William Andrews ed., pub. Andrews, 1895
The Doctor in time of Pestilence, in ***The***

Doctor in History, Literature, Folk-lore etc. William Andrews ed., pub. Andrews, 1896
Laws Relating to the Gypsies, Sanctuaries, in ***Legal Lore; Curiosities of Law and Lawyers,*** William Andrews ed., pub. Andrews, 1897
Supernatural Interference in Church Building, in ***Antiquities and Curiosities of the Church***, William Andrews ed., pub. Andrews, 1897
Introduction in ***The First Step…An Essay on the Morals of Diet. To which are added Two Stories, by Leo Tolstoy*****. Translated by Alymer Maude, with an Introduction by William E. A. Axon**, pub. Broadbent, 1900
Italian Influence on Chaucer, in ***Chaucer Memorial Lectures, Read before the Royal Society of Literature,*** Percy W Ames ed., pub. Asher, 1900
The Political History of Manchester, in ***Manchester of Today: Handbook and Guide to Manchester: British Medical Association, 10th Annual Meeting, Manchester*****, 1902, C W Sutton ed.**, pub. Sherratt & Hughes, 1902
The Political History of Manchester, in ***Manchester of Today: Handbook and Guide to Manchester: British Pharmaceutical***

***Conference*, C W Sutton ed.,** pub. Sherratt & Hughes, 1907 [Rev.ed 1902 edition: Re-issued in 1908 for the Associated Booksellers Manchester Meeting]
Introduction in ***An Elegy Witten in a Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray***, Broadbent Miniatures No. 6, pub. Broadbent c 1908
The Mobbing of Garrison, in ***The Children's Hour*** Vol 8, Eva March Tappan ed., pub. Houghton Mifflin, pub,1909
Introduction, in ***Old St. Paul's by William Harrison Ainsworth***, pub. Dent, 1911
Foreword in ***Book of the Vegetarian Exhibition, Festival and Carnival***, Henry. B. Amos ed. [
Foreword in ***Little Derwent's Breakfast by Emily Trevenen***, Broadbent Treasuries 18, pub. Broadbent, 1913

CATEGORY THREE: REFERENCE BOOKS: WEAA AS CONTRIBUTOR

WEAA is known to have contributed to several reference works. It is difficult to track down the exact time and topics of his contributions.

Chambers Cyclopaedia
WEAA was requested in 1875 to write entries for *Chambers Cyclopaedia*. These may include Orphan, Palm, Pantomime, Papier Maché, and

Pneumatic Dispatch Tubes.

Supplement to English Cyclopaedia

Co-operation, 1873

Commune, 1873

Companion to the British Almanac

Free Public Libraries of Great Britain (1869), Notes on Co-operation Abroad (1870), Masters and Men (1871), The Largest Book in the World (1872) Notes on the Specifications of British Patents 1617-1869 (1872), Learned Societies and Academies (1873), Utilization of Waste (1874), The Arab Numerals (1875), Free Public Libraries of Great Britain, (1876), Libraries Ancient and Modern (1876), The Old English Guilds (1878), Public Libraries of America (1879), Education of the Deaf and Dumb (1880), Food of the Poor (1881), Facts and Fancies of Longevity, Luxury, Ancient and Modern (1883), Insects injurious to Agriculture (1884), Local and Municipal Government (1885), The Historical MSS Commission (1887)

Johnson's New Universal Cyclopaedia, also known as Johnson's American Cyclopaedia

Jute and the Jute Trade (1876),

WEAA wrote several other articles for this, including 'Institute of France' and 'Looms'

Dictionary of National Biography (now Oxford Dictionary of National Biography)

There are fifty-six entries listed for WEAA in the *Contributors' Index* compiled by Gillian Fenwick in 1989. The *Index of Contributors* published by DNB in 2004 gives twenty entries, reflecting the ongoing process of revision. As well as his own entries in the As, Bs and Cs, WEAA completed some for John Eglington Bailey who was in failing health.

Encyclopaedia Britannica

WEAA contributed an article on Manchester, probably for the nineth edition, 1875-1889. He revised this and added one for Stockport for the eleventh edition, 1910-1911.

Encyclopaedia of Out-of-the-Way Knowledge, pub. William Andrews
It does not seem that this project resulted in a published book.
Oxford English Dictionary
WEAA was one of the many enthusiastic contributors to the OED.

CATEGORY FOUR: DIALECT STORIES, SKETCHES AND POEMS

The Gallowsfield Ghost, *Ashton Reporter* of 27th May 1865
Dingle Cot, *Ashton Reporter*, 31st March 1866
Dr. Rondeau's Revenge, and Other Lancashire Sketches, pub. Abel Heywood, 1867
The Golden Bracelet: a Sketch [Published between 1867-1870: No copy traced]
Cousin Liz [Verses. Published c 1867. No copy traced]
A Case of Samples: being selections from the works of J.T.Staton, 'Uncle Owdem,' W.E.A. Axon, etc., pub. Abel Heywood, 1869
Abel Heywood's Christmas Budget: Mr Pimchook's Party: a series of tales and songs for the merry season, pub. Abel Heywood, 1870, [WEAA editor and contributor. Includes The Mishaps of Robin o'Dingle: a romance of Southport Sands by WEAA, also pub. *Co-operative News,* 1873]
Billy o' Bent's Berryin', or the Dule i' Dingle, pub. Abel Heywood, 1870
The Boggart of Orton Clough, pub. Abel

Heywood, 1870
The Haunted Bridge, or, the Man who married a Ghost!, pub. Abel Heywood, 1870
Abel Heywood's Christmas Budget. The Old Sparrow-Hawk and its Christmas Guests; a series of tales and songs for the merry season, pub. Abel Heywood, 1871 [WEAA editor and contributor]
Exchange no robbery: or Southport Sands: a farce for four males and one female, pub. Abel Heywood, 1883 [Reprinted from *Ben Brierley's Journal*, 25th February 1879]
Owd Dan's Fiddle, *Manchester Guardian*, 15th July 1890 [Dialect Poem]

CATEGORY FIVE: POETRY: WEAA AS AUTHOR, TRANSLATOR OR ADAPTOR:

[Books are Starred *]**
The Grave of Little Tim, privately printed, 1864 [Also known as *Poor Little Tim*]
A Christmas Carol, *Ashton Reporter*, 24th December 1864
Reminiscences, *Manchester Crichton Club M.S. Magazine* 5 2, August 1864 [Reprinted in *Crichton Annual*, 1865]
At the Casement, *Crichton Annual*, 1865
A Crimean Incident, *Crichton Annual*, 1865
Song, *Crichton Annual*, 1866

Translation of Arnault's 'Feuille', 1872
[Poem: in his 1913 paper 'Literary wanderings of Arnault's "Feuille"' WEAA remembered this translation was in a small periodical associated with a London bazaar. Not traced.]
Prologue for the Exhibition of Works in Black and White, held by the MLC on 23rd November 1875, *Manchester Courier*, 24th November 1875
*** ***Exotica***, privately printed, 1876
[Collection: Translations in Verse from the French, German, Italian, Latin, Spanish]
The Ancoats Skylark, *Manchester Quarterly* 3 1884, and *VM,* 1st December 1884
Ever the Same, *Manchester Quarterly* 3, 1884
Kindness to Animals *VM,* 1st September 1884
The Blind Man's Wife, *Manchester Quarterly* 4, 1885-86
The First Roses, *Manchester Quarterly* 4, 1885-86
A Legend of Hastings, Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 4, 1885-86]
Vegetarian Acrostic, *VM*, 1st July 1886
The Wood, pub. John Heywood, Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 6, 1886-87
Dickybird, *The Vegetarian* 1 24, 16th June 1888
Truth and the Love of Truth, *The Vegetarian* 1

32, 11th August 1888
Two Sonnets: The Ypres Tower at Rye, A Pyramid, *Manchester Quarterly* 7, 1887-88
*** **Four Poems and Four Sketches** in ***North Country Poets: Poems and Biographies,*** *Volume 1,* William Andrews ed.] [Poems: The Ancoats Skylark, All is not Gold, The Author of the 'Imitatio Christi', Epigram: Sketches: Ben Brierley, Joseph Cooper, George Milner, Edwin Waugh]
Church of the Little Fawn, *Manchester Quarterly* 8, 1888-89, and *The Vegetarian* 2, 12th October 1889
*** ***Ten Sonnets,*** privately printed, 1889
*** ***Romany Songs Englished***, pub. Edinburgh, Reprinted from the *Journal of Gypsy Lore* 24, October 1889
The Prophet, *VM*, 1 January 1889 [Anonymous but likely to be by WEAA]
Speak, Ye Four, Where Do Ye Dwell? Imitated from the German of August Schwarzkopff, *Littell's Living Age* 183, 14th December 1889, and *Academy 36, 1889*
The Counsel of Perfection, *Manchester Quarterly* 9, 1889-90
Food vs Physic, *VM*, 1st April 1891
The Kingdom of Frugality, *VM*, 1st September

1891
The Parable of the Wondrous Vine, *VM*, 1st August 1891
The Slave of Death: imitated from the Italian of Franco Sacchetti, 1335-1410, 1891, Reprinted from *Papers of the MLC,* 1890: Also, in *Collected Sermons of Thomas Fuller ed. Bailey, WEAA* and in *Practical Socialism by James Ramsey MacDonald, 1891*
Moses and the Lamb: A Legend from the Talmud, *VM* 6, 1892
Prologue for the Entertainment in aid of the Seaman's Charities, given on board the S.S. Arizona (New York to Liverpool), Friday, June 23, 1893, privately printed, 1893
Sands of Weeping, Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 12, 1893
*** ***The Ancoats Skylark and Other Verses – original and translated***, pub. John Heywood, 1894, {Collection]
Battle Creek Michigan, *VM* 8, 1894
On the Death of a Country Parson, The Poet, **and** ***The World***, *The Vegetarian Review,* 1894
The Wild Doves of St. Francis, *VM* 8, 1894
A Legend of the Good Saint Guthlac, *VM* 9, 1895
A New Year Greeting, The Bridge of Hope,

Promise of Spring, *VM* 10, 1896
How a Good View was Spoiled, A New Year Greeting, Sunlight, St. Francis of Assisi and the Fisher of Rieti, *VM* 11, 1897
Post Pluvia Phoebus: from Emanuel Swedenborg's first poem, written at the age of 12 years and four months, pub.1897 [Later reprinted *VM*]
The Altar of the Pious, The Four Seasons, *VM* 1, 1st February 1898
The Beggarwoman by S. Francesco at Fiesole: Translation, pub. John Heywood, Reprinted from the *Manchester Quarterly*, April 1898
I nouvi scavi: a Guido Baccelli sonetti due/ Marino Morelli ; con traduzione inglese per Gugliemo E. A. Axon, pub. Manchester, 1898 [Includes English translation by WEAA]
Homer Tankenemengro 'dre Romanes: a Quatrain of Omar Khayyam in Romanes, the Speech of the English Gypsies By W.E.A. Axon and H T Crofton, pub. Sherratt & Hughes, Reprinted from the *Manchester Quarterly* 18, July 1899
New Year's Day, *VM,* 1st January 1899
The Children's Vegetarian Movement, The Dawn of the Twentieth Century, Work *VM,* 1900

Alkon's Ox, in *Kith and Kin; Poems of Animal Life*, Henry S. Salt ed., pub. Bell, 1901
The Dawn of the Twentieth Century, Duty, *VM* 3, 1901
*** ***A Treasury of Translations by William E. A. Axon,*** pub. Broadbent, Broadbent Treasuries No.7, 1st ed. 1902, 2nd ed.1903, 3rd ed.1905 [Collection]
A Christmas Greeting, Herophilus on Health, *VM* 1, 1904
*** **Songs** in ***Songs of Hope and Brotherhood,*** Albert Broadbent ed. pub. Vegetarian Society, Broadbent] [Eighty songs and hymns for use at Vegetarian Summer Schools, Many by WEAA. No copy traced]
The Green Hedge: a poem, pub. Sherratt & Hughes [Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 23, 1904
A Christmas Greeting, Herophilus on Health, *VM* 1, 1904
*** Adversity, The Blind Man's Wife, Duty Done, The Gifts of the King, Wisdom in ***A Treasury of Consolation Poems selected by Albert Broadbent***, pub. Broadbent, 1905 6th edition] [*A Treasury of Consolation* was dedicated to WEAA]
Footfalls, Land of Dreams, The Past and the

Future, The Song of the Landless Men in Towns, *Millgate Monthly* 1, October 1905 – September 1906
The Past and the Future, *Millgate Monthly* 1, October 1905 – March 1906
*** ***An Axon Treasury: Verses Original and Translated by William E. A. Axon***, pub. Broadbent, 1907 [4th ed. of ***A Treasury of Translations*** expanded with 17 original poems: Also known as ***Verses Original and Translated***] [Collection]
Laborare est Orare, The Skylark in ***Songs of Life and Hope selected by Albert Broadbent,*** pub. Harrap, c 1907
The New Day, *VM* 4, 1907
*** Adversity, Better Things, The Blind Man's Wife, Duty Done, Perfect Friendship, Promise of Spring, Wisdom, and a prose piece 'The Blessing of Giving' in ***The Treasury of Consolation Poems selected by Albert Broadbent,*** pub. Bell, 1908 edition
Lincoln and the Brown Thrush, *Millgate Monthly* 2, October 1906 – June 1907
Filey Bay, John Greenleaf Whittier, *Millgate Monthly* 3 1, July 1907 – March 1908,
Be Good and Do Good, *Millgate Monthly* 3 2, April 1908 – September 1908

Onward: with music. For Children's Meeting, London, 1st May, *VM* 5, 1908,
The Golden Age, *VM* 6, 1909
The Birthplace of Dante, The Herb of Happiness, *Millgate Monthly* 4 2, April 1909 – September 1909
On the Thames Embankment, Sunset at the Seaside, Two Frogs, *Millgate Monthly* 5 1, October 1909 – March 1910
Man's Fate, *Millgate Monthly*, 5 2, April 1910 – September 1910
The Laddie and the Lassie, *Sunday Strand* 21, 1910
Duty in ***In Praise of Duty,*** Albert Broadbent ed.***,*** Broadbent Miniatures No.1.
The Lizard, *Millgate Monthly* 7 2, April 1912 – September 1912
The Maid of the South Country: illustrated by Dorothy Axon, *Millgate Monthly* 8 2, April 1913 – September 1913
The Answering Sign, *The Inquirer*, 10th May 1913
Upward and Onward, *VM* 10 1913

CATEGORY SIX: JOURNALS EDITED BY WEAA

The Band of Hope Treasury, pub. Temperance Society [Edited in 1871]

Guardian: Local Notes and Queries [Created and edited: Ran from 1874 to 1877]
The American Library Journal [Assist. editor c 1877-1878]
Ben Brierley's Journal [Edited in 1879]
British Architect [Edited for 3 years around 1879]
The Field Naturalist and Scientific Student, pub. Heywood [Created and edited by WEAA. Ran from 1882-1883]
The Field Naturalist and Scientific Student: Complete**, Edited by William E.A. Axon,** pub. Abel Heywood, 1882 [Several articles by WEAA]
Book Lore, pub. Elliot Stock [Created and edited. Ran from 1884-1887]
Manchester Quarterly**, pub. MLC** [Edited 1882-1888]
Temperance Star [Edited for years according to the family]
Vegetarian Messenger, pub. VS [Edited c 1888]

CATEGORY SEVEN: PAMPHLETS

Free Libraries, pub. in Glasgow, 1866
Co-operation and Partnerships of Industry; the Future of Labour, pub. 1867
The Legend of the Disguised Knight, pub. In Derby, pub.1869 [Reprinted from *The*

Reliquary 8, 1867-8]
First Book Printed in Manchester, WEAA had 14 copies of this *N&Q,* opening article,30th January 1869, reprinted as photographed columns pasted onto blank sheets]
Poetry of the Bibliomania, pub.1869 [Reprinted from *The Reliquary*, January 1869]
Public Executions in Manchester, pub. Smith, 1869 [Reprinted from *The Reliquary* 9, 1868-69]
Hints on the Formation of Small Libraries Intended for Public Use, pub. Trübner, 1870 [Preface – 'Prepared for the Co-operative Congress, May and June 1869': C. W. Sutton noted 'Reprinted from the *Co-operator*, and subsequently reprinted in *Power's Handy-Book about Books*, and in *Philobiblion*. A French translation appeared in the Journal de Liege.']
Legend of the Disguised Knight: an essay upon the incident in the Romance of King Horn, of the Bride recovered by the Ring Dropped in the Cup, with parallel English, French, Italian, German, Swedish, and Sanskrit Stories, pub. 1870 [Reprinted from *Transactions RSL* 9, 1870: Partially based on articles in *The Reliquary* 8 and 10: Read to RSL, 19th January 1870]]

Statistical Notes on the Free Town Libraries of Great Britain and the Continent, pub. 1870 [Reprinted from *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 33 3, 1870]
On the Extent of Ancient Libraries [Read to RSL c August 1872: Reprinted from *Transactions RSL* 10, 1872]
A Plea for Free Speech: an Address delivered at the inaugural meeting of the Manchester Eclectic Society, 11th June 1872, pub Trübner, 1872
Smoking and Thinking, pub. In Dumferline, 1872 [Reprinted from the *English Mechanic*]
Tobacco and Disease: three letters with additional matter from the English Mechanic, pub. Trübner, 1872
The Tobacco Question: physiologically, chemically, botanically, and statistically considered, pub. John Heywood, 1872 [Reprinted from the *Dublin University Magazine,* September 1871]
Future of the English Language: an Argument for Spelling Reform, pub. Pitman [Talk given to Eclectic Society 5 April 1873: Reprinted with additions from *Quarterly Journal of Science*, July 1873]
Nixon's Original Cheshire Prophecy etc., pub.

Abel Heywood, 1873
Physiological Position of Tobacco, pub. Trübner, 1873 [Reprinted with additions from *Quarterly Journal of Science*, October 1872]
Ballads and Songs of Yorkshire. Brief Abstract of a Paper read before the Manchester Literary Club, January 27, 1874 [Twenty copies printed]
Biographical Notice of Ann Lee, a Manchester Prophetess and Founder of the American Sect of the Shakers, pub. Brackell [Reprinted from *Transactions the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 27 1874]
On the Relative Proportion of the Sexes: Read March 18th, 1874 , pub.1874 [Reprinted from *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society*, 1874]
Notice of the Rev. Thomas Threlkald, of Rochdale: remarkable for unusual powers of memory, 1739-1806, pub.1875 [Only 14 published: Reprinted from *Manchester Guardian*: *Local Notes and Queries*, 27th April 1874]
A Bibliographical List of Books illustrating the Lancashire Dialect, pub. Childs, 1875, [Appendix to *Papers MLC* 2, 1875-76]
Book Rarities of Manchester Free Library: an

Address delivered in the Free Reference Library, Campfield, February 23, 1875, pub. Abel Heywood, 1875 [Reprinted from *Papers MLC* 1, 1874-1875]

On Some Defects in the Statistics of Books & Libraries, pub.1875 [Reprinted from *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society*, 1875]

Statistics of the Deaf and Dumb, pub.1875 [Reprinted from *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society*, 1875]

In Memoriam 'Bibliothecarius Chethamensis', Thomas Jones, B.A., F.S.A., pub. in Manchester, 1876 [Read at MLC 14th December 1875: Reprinted from *Papers MLC*, 2 1875-76:]

Lancashire and Cheshire Traditions, illustrated by a manuscript written by Thomas Barritt, pub. in London, pub.1876 [Reprinted from *The Reliquary* 17, 1876]

The Smallest Books in the World: a Bibliographical Note, pub. Guardian Letterpress, 1876 [Reprinted from N&Q, 2nd October 1876]

Catalogue of the Books in the Public Free Library, presented by D.Chadwick to the Corporation of Macclesfield, Compiled by

WEAA, pub.1877
A Glance at the Westminster Free Library, pub. Guardian Letterpress, 1877 [Reprinted from the *British Architect,* 21st September 1877]
Life of Oliver Cromwell, pub. Tubbs, 1877
A Manchester Will of the Fifteenth Century: made by G. Manchester, with remarks upon it by W.E.A. Axon, pub. George, 1877 [Reprinted from *Papers MLC 3, 1876-77*]
The Mayor of Manchester (A.H.) and his Slanderers, pub. Tubbs, 1877
Notabilia Bibliothecae Chethamensis, pub. Ireland, 1877 [Reprinted from *Papers MLC* 3, 1876-1877: Handlist prepared for MLC Visit to Chetham Library, 19th June 1877]
On a Printed Catalogue for the British Museum Library [Reprinted from *Papers MLC* 3, 1876-1877: Read at MLC, 22 October 1877]
Some account of a curious astronomical, astrological, and medical MS. in the Chetham Library, Manchester by John Harland…With additions by W.E.A. Axon, pub.1877 [Reprinted from *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 29 1876-1877]
Some Defects in the Statistics of the English

Publishing Trade. Read June 27th, 1877, pub. J Roberts, 1877 [Reprinted from *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society*, 1877: Cover title 'On the Statistics of the English Publishing Trade']
What is the War about? Remarks on the War between Russia and Turkey, pub. Tubbs, 1877
Book Rarities of the Warrington Museum, pub. Warrington Museum and Library, 1878
Botanical Books in the Manchester Free Library. An address delivered to the United Field Naturalist's Society, on Sunday, November 24th, 1878, pub. Neild, 1878
British Museum in Relation to National Culture, pub.1878 [Paper read at Conference of Librarians in October 1877: Reprinted from *Sunday Review*, April 1878: Also in *Library Journal*, November-December 1877 and in the *Transactions and Proceedings of the Conference of Librarians Held in London, 1877*]
Good and Evil of Tobacco, pub. Eliot Stock, 1878 [Reprinted with revisions from *Colburn's New Monthly*]
On a Printed Catalogue of the British Museum Library. Read October 22, 1877, pub.1878 [Handwritten note on British Library copy - 20 copies printed: Reprinted

from *Papers MLC* 4, 1878-79]
The Song of the Nightingale, pub. 1878 [50 copies printed]
The Tobacco Question: physiologically, chemically, botanically, and statistically considered, pub. John Heywood, 1878 [P: Reprinted with revisions from *Dublin University Magazine,* September 1871]
Bolton and its Free Library, pub. Ireland, 1879 [Reprinted from *Papers MLC* 5, 1879]
John Ruskin: A Bibliographical Biography, pub.1879 [Reprinted from *Papers MLC* 5, 1879: 2nd edition published 1881]
The One-Legged Robin by A Manchester Pythagorean, privately printed, 1879 [Reprinted from *Ben Brierley's Journal*, 25th February 1879]
Sunday Opening of Libraries and Museums, pub.1879 [Reprinted from *Manchester Times*, 6th July 1878]
Chief Librarianship of the Birmingham Free Libraries: Testimonials in favour of William E.A. Axon, pub. Ireland, 1879
The Libraries of Lancashire and Cheshire, pub. 1880 [Reprinted from *Papers MLC*, 6 1880]
Sunday in Manchester. Address delivered at

the Hanover Gallery…on Sunday, June 27, 1880, pub. Sunday Society, 1880 [Reprinted from *Sunday Review* 4, October 1879-July 1880]

Additions to the Botanical Books in Manchester Free Library from November, 1878, to August, 1881, pub. James Nield, 1881

Corn or Cattle: a comparison of the economic results of agriculture in relation to national food supply, pub. VS, 1881 [Read 1 September 1881 at British Association, York: Reprinted, mostly in full, in *York Herald*, *Farmer*, *Agricultural Gazette*, *Chamber of Agriculture Journal*. Reprinted from *VM,* 1st November 1881]

George Eliot's Use of Dialect, A Paper Read before the Manchester Literary Club, January 24, 1881, pub. Trübner for the English Dialect Society, 1881 [Reprinted from *Papers MLC* 7, 1881]

J.M. Hawcroft. In Memoriam, pub. Lingard, 1881 [Reprinted from the *Barnsley Chronicle*]

Legislation for Free Public Libraries, pub. Salford Steam, 1881 [Read at 4th Library Association Conference, 14th September 1881: Reprinted from *Transactions and Proceedings of*

the Fourth and Fifth Annual Meetings of the Library Association]
The Literary History of Parnell's "Hermit", pub. Taylor & Francis, 1881 [Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society]
On an Epidemic of Trichophyton Tonsurans, pub. Brown, 1881 [Reprinted from *The Naturalist*, September 1881]
On the Plague of Caterpillars (Charaeas Graminis) at Clitheroe, pub.1881 [Read at United Field Naturalists' Society, 19th June,1881: Reprinted from the *Manchester City News*, 25th June 1881]
***On the Pronunciation of Deaf Mutes who have been Taught to Articulate*, pub. in Manchester, 1881** [Read at a meeting of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, 15th November 1881, and at a meeting of the United Field Naturalists, at Stalybridge, Sunday 11th Dec 1881]
Relation of Archaeology to Art: an Address delivered at a joint meeting of the Manchester Academy of Fine Arts and the Manchester Literary Club, March 8, 1881, pub. in Manchester, 1881 [Reprinted from *Papers MLC* 7, 1881]
Cost of Theatrical Amusements, 1882 [Read

before Manchester Statistical Society, 14th June 1882: Reprinted from *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society*, 1881-82]
Did Shakspere visit Lancashire?, 1882 [Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 2, formerly *Papers MLC,* April 1882]
A List of the Leading Public Libraries in the United Kingdom, free and otherwise in the United Kingdom, pub. Central Labour Exchange Offices [Also has title 'A Guide to Public Libraries': One of the Pioneer Series, relating to Labour and Emigration]
Milton's 'Comus' and Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess' Compared [Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 1, 1882]
The Story of Lillo's 'Fatal Curiosity', 1882 [P: Reprinted from *N&Q,* 14 January 1882]
Sunday in Lancashire and Cheshire, 1882 [P: Reprinted from *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 33 1880-1881]
Education in Salford: retrospective and prospective: read June 20th, 1883, pub. John Heywood, 1883 [Reprinted from *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society*, 1882-83]
The Geographical distribution of Men of Genius, 1883 [Reprinted from *Manchester*

Quarterly 2, 1883]
On Fritz Reuter's Story of the 'Ganshandel', pub.1884[Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 3, 1884]
A Vindication of Natural Diet by P.B. Shelley, pub. Shelley Society, 1884 [New edition. With a prefatory notice signed by H.S. Salt and WEAA]
Wardley Skull-House, pub. Blacklock, 1884 [P: Reprinted from *TLCAS* 1, 1883]
Hugh of Manchester, a Statesman and Divine of the Thirteenth Century, pub.1885 [Read to LCAS in 1884: Reprinted from *Transactions LCAS*, 2 1884]
The Life of the Late Joseph Livesey, founder of the temperance movement, pub. Abel Heywood, 1885]
Books and Reading: an Address at the Oldham Public Library, February 6th, 1886 pub. 1886
The Holy Mountain: A Discourse: A Sermon preached at the Unitarian Free Church, Pendleton, 20th March, 1886, pub. John Heywood
History and Present Position of Shorthand, pub.1887 [Reprinted from *The British Almanac*, 1887, and *Phonetic Journal*, 22nd and 29th

January 1887]
On the Increase of Wealth and Population in Lancashire, pub. 1887 [Read at 1887 meeting: Reprinted from Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, *Transactions*, 57, 1887]
Vegetarismus und litterarische Arbeit, pub. A. von Seefeld, 1887
What was the First Book printed in Manchester? pub.1887 [Reprinted from *TLCAS* 4, 1886]
Who was Mistress Joyce Lewes of Manchester? pub.1887 [Reprinted from *TLCAS* 4, 1886]
Berber Folk-Tales, pub.1888 [Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 7, 1887-88]
In Memoriam Adolph Samelson, pub. John Heywood, 1888 [Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 7, April 1887-88]
In Memoriam J. E. Bailey, pub. John Heywood, 1888 [Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 7, April 1887-88]
Possibilities of Co-operation in Temperance Works, pub.1888
Significance of Kufic Coins in Northumbria, pub. 1888 [Reprinted from *Northumbria*, T Tindall Wildridge ed. pub. Gray, 1888]

Thomas Lurting: A Liverpool Worthy, pub.1888 [Reprinted from *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 37, 1885]

The Claims of the Temperance Movement upon the Educated Classes, pub. Onward, 1889

English the Dominant Language of the Future, pub. Pitman, 1889

Henry Ainsworth, the Puritan Commentator: Address to LCAS, Winter Session 1889 [Reprinted from *TLCAS* 6, 1888: by WEAA and Ernest Axon]

On General Gordon's copy of Newman's 'Dream of Gerontius', pub. Heywood, 1889 [Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 8, 1888-89]

Vegetarianism and National Economy, pub. John Heywood, 1889

The First Teetotal Tract. On Abstinence from Intoxicating Liquor. First published in 1821. By Joseph Brotherton, With Biographical Introduction by William E.A. Axon, pub. Onward,1890

Genius and Vegetarianism: the Witness of Shelley, Leonardo da Vinci, Maeterlink, Nikola Tesla, pub. Vegetarian Society, 1890

An Irish Analogue of Nixon's Cheshire Prophecy, pub. Manchester, 1890 [Reprinted from *Transactions LCAS* 7, 1889]
A Note on William Rowlinson, pub. John Heywood, 1890 [Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 9, October 1890]
The Story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, pub. John Heywood, 1890 [Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 9, 1889-90]
Sunday Closing from the Citizen's Standpoint, pub. Central Association for Stopping the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday [Sunday Closing Tract 86: 1890 possible date]
Thomas Taylor, the Platonist: a Biographical and Bibliographical Sketch, pub.1890 [Reprinted from *The Library,* 2 1, 1st January 1890]
Die Ausdehnung der modernen stenograpischen Literatur, pub. 1891 [Reprinted from *Journal für Stenographie* 3, Jahrgang 1891]
Bibliotheca Fulleriana: a List of the Writings of Thomas Fuller, D.D., pub. Gresham, 1891 [12 copies]
The Claims of Brotherhood: Ancoats Addresses, pub. Darrah, 1891 [Addresses and verses given by WEAA]

The Increase of Food and Population from a Vegetarian Standpoint: a Paper read at the meeting of the British Association, at Cardiff, on August 25th, pub. 1891 [Reprinted from *VM,* 1st October 1891]
A Lancashire Poet - Samuel Laycock, pub. John Heywood, 1891[Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 10, 1890-91]
Shelley's Vegetarianism…Read at a meeting of the Shelley Society … November 12th, 1890, pub. Vegetarian Society, 1891 [Reprinted from *VM,* 1st March 1891]
Bibliographical Note on Espinosa's 'Flores', private circulation, pub.1892 [Reprinted from *The Library* 1 1, 1st January 1892]
Charles Dickens and Shorthand, pub. John Heywood, 1892 [Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 11, 1891-92]
In Memoriam J. D. Watson (with illustrations), pub. John Heywood, 1892 [Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 11, April 1892]
Temperance Teaching in Education, pub. Brook, 1892
Note on a suggested index of translations of foreign literature into the English language, pub. Darrah, 1893 private circulation

Dammeg y winwydden ryfeddol / gan David Thomas (Alfryn); The Parable of the Wondrous Vine, translated by WEAA, pub. Darrah, 1893

Joseph Livesey, the Pioneer of the Temperance Movement: his life and labours, pub. Darrah, 1893

Kindness to Animals in Ancient and Modern Times, The Cooper Memorial Lecture, 10 April 1894, pub. Vegetarian Society [Reprinted from *VM* 8, 1894]

The Library of Richard Brereton, of Ley, pub. Gill, 1894 [Reprinted from *TLCAS* 12, and *The Antiquary* 30, January-June 1894]

Vegetarianism and the Intellectual Life, pub. Vegetarian Society, 1894 [Second edition]

Alexander Barclay and Manchester, pub. John Heywood, 1895 [Reprinted from the *Proceedings of the Manchester Literary Club*, 1894-5]

Chronological Notes on the Visitations of Plague in Lancashire and Cheshire, pub. Gill, 1895 [Reprinted from *TLCAS* 12, 1894]

Gaskell Bibliography: a list of the writings of Mrs. E.C. Gaskell… and of..the Rev. William Gaskell, pub. John Heywood, 1895 [By WEAA and Ernest Axon: Reprinted from the *Papers of the Manchester Literary Club*,

1894-5]
Literary History of the Comedy of 'The Drummer', pub. John Heywood, 1895 [Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly* 14, 1895]
On a Bronze Coin of Aurelian, pub. Gill, 1896 [Reprinted from *TLCAS* 13, 1895]
Fifty Years of the Vegetarian Society: looking backward and looking forward: Read at the Jubilee Conference, Ramsgate, 1st June 1897, pub. Vegetarian Society, 1897 [Reprinted from *VM* 11, 1897]
On an English Translation of Francesca de Chaves's 'Mirror of man's life', with the text, pub. Athenaeum Press, 1897
The Rechabites and the Rechabim: or, the ancient Hebrew teetotallers and the modern Friendly Society, pub. National Temperance League, 1897
De Quincey and J.F. Ferrier, pub. John Heywood, 1898 [Reprinted from *Manchester Quarterly 17,* 1898]
Ortensio Lando, a Humorist of the Renaissance, pub.1898 [Reprinted from *Transactions RSL*, 20, 1898]
Statistics of British Publishing and the Need of an Official Bibliography: Read at Monthly

Library Association Meeting in London, pub.1898 [Reprinted from *The Library* 10, 1st April 1898]
England Free and Sober: Address at New Islington Hall, Manchester, 26th November 1899, pub. British Temperance League, 1899]
The Frugal Life: A paradox by Ortensio Lando, 1543, pub. in Manchester, 1899
On a Reference to the Evil Eye in the Anglo-Saxon Poem of Beowulf, pub.1899 [Reprinted from *Transactions RSL* 21, 1899]
Self imposed Taxation in the Reign of Victoria, pub. British Anti-Tobacco and Anti-Narcotic League, pub.1899 [Second edition]
A Sermon on Malt. With a Notice of the Rev. John Dod. Introduction by W.E.A.A, pub. Temperance Union, 1899
Tullia d'Aragona, a Poetess of the later Renaissance, pub. 1899 [Reprinted from *Transactions RSL* 21, 1899]
The De Quincey Collection at Moss Side, pub. Library Association, 1900
Drink and Death, pub. British Temperance League, 1900
An England Free and Sober, pub. British Temperance League, 1900 [Ancoats Sunday Lecture, New Islington Hall, Manchester]

The Machinery of the 'Rape of the Lock': Pope, Villars, and Borri, pub. 1900 [Reprinted from *Transactions RSL* 22, 1900]
Simwnt Fychan's Welsh translation of Martial's Epigram of the Happy Life. X 47. With Latin Text and English Verse translation, pub. Gill, 1900 [Reprinted from *TLCAS* 17, 1899]
Archery in Manchester in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, pub. Gill, 1901 [Reprinted from *TLCAS* 18, 1900]
Etienne Dolet, the Martyr of the Renaissance, 1901 [Reprinted from *Transactions RSL* 22, 1900]
A Fifteenth-century Life of St Dorothea, printed from an MS in Chetham's Library, 1901 [Reprinted from *Antiquary* 37, 1901]
Gil Vicente and Lafontaine: a Portuguese parallel of 'La laitière et le pot au lait', pub. Adlard, 1901 [Reprinted from *Transactions RSL* 23, 1901]
The Witness of the Poets, pub. Vegetarian Society, 1901 [Read at Vegetarian Summer School 1901: Reprinted from *VM* 3, 1901]
The Wonderful Child: Tracts issued in 1679 Relating to Charles Bennett of Manchester, Alleged to Speak Latin, Greek, and Hebrew,

***When* Three,** 1901 [First published in *Chetham Miscellanies* NS 47 1 1900-1901]
On the Mohammedan Gospel of Barnabas, 1902 [Reprinted from *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 1902]
The Story of Belfagor in Literature and Folk-lore. With an Appendix containing the 'Belfagore' of Giovanni Brevio, now first translated into English, pub. Adlard, 1902 [Read 26th February 1902: Reprinted from *Transactions RSL 23,* 1901]
Tennyson's 'Lover's Tale,' its original and analogues, 1902 [Reprinted from *Transactions RSL 24,* 1902]
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Academy, Almonds and Raisins, American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb, The American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal, Anti-Caste, Antiquary, Argonaut, Athenaeum
Band of Hope Treasury, The Bellman, Ben Brierley's Journal, La Bibliofilia,
Bibliographer, Bildung und Staat Volksbibliotheken, Book Lore, Bookman,

The British Architect and Northern Engineer, The British Weekly, The Broadway
Cassell's Magazine, Churchman's Family Magazine, The Churchman's Shilling Magazine, City Jackdaw, The Classical Review, Colburn's New Monthly
Contemporary Review, Co-operator, Cope's Tobacco Plant, Country Words, The Crescent, Crichton Annual
The Day of Rest, Deutero-Cananica: The International Society of the Apocrypha,
Dublin Review, Dublin University Magazine
The English Mechanic, The Entomologist Monthly
Family Magazine, Field Naturalist and Scientific Student, Food Journal, Fortnightly Review (1)
The Gentleman's Magazine, Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana Hardwick's Science Gossip, Humane Review
Inquirer, Journal für Stenographie, Journal of Gypsy Lore, Journal of the Society of Arts, Journal of the Statistical Society of London, Journal of the Welsh Bibliographical Society, The Journal of Theological Studies Leisure Hour, The Library, Library Chronicle, Literary Mart, Littell's Living Age,
The London Magazine, Longman's Magazine
The Manchester Christmas Annual, The Manchester Magazine, Manchester Quarterly (formerly Papers of the Manchester Literary Club), Meliora, Millgate Monthly, Modern Language Review, Musical Opinion and Music Trade Review
National Observer, The Naturalist, Nature, New Church Magazine, Notes & Queries, Nonconformist Musical Journal
Odds & Ends [Manuscript journal at MCL], Oddfellows Magazine
Pallas, Pelican Record,The People's Magazine, Phonetic Journal, Pitman's Journal
Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, Proceedings of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester, Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Publications of the English Dialect Society
Quarterly Journal of Science
Reader's Review, The Reliquary
Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art, Scottish Review
The Shadow, The Shilling Magazine, Sixpenny Magazine, Social Economist,
Social Reformer, Speaker, The Sphinx, St. James's Magazine, Sunday

Review
Temperance Magazine, Temperance Spectator, Temperance Star, T.P's Weekly, Transactions of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, Transactions of the Manchester Literary Club, Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society, Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, Transactions of the Statistical Society of London, Trübner's American and Oriental Literary Record
Vegetarian Messenger [Formerly Dietic Review with several other changes of title]
The Vegetarian Review
Westminster Review
Y Cymmrodor,

Newspapers
Alliance News, Ashton Weekly Reporter, Barnsley Chronicle, Cambrian News
Co-operative News, Food News, Labour News, Manchester City News, Manchester Courier, Manchester Evening News, Manchester Examiner, Manchester Guardian, Middleton Albion, The Nation, Reynold's News, Unitarian Herald, United Temperance Gazette, Westminster Gazette, Yorkshire Post

WORKS IN PROGRESS AT THE TIME OF DEATH

***The Blood Accusation against the Jews*, *Cerdd y Blottyn Du*, *Day Fatalities*,**

A Footnote to Dante: the Story of Gianni Schicchi, Jacques Callot [revision of 1867 article], ***Liber Memoralis Caleostro***, ***A Sermon in the Days of Good Queen Bess***

SOME FOLLOW UPS

WEAA's works have frequently been reprinted, mined for quotations, or revised. These are some examples.

1914

An Axon Treasury, Verses Original and Translated by William E. A. Axon, selected by his grandson Geoffrey R. Axon, pub. Broadbent [Broadbent Treasuries No.19]

The Canon of De Quincey's Writings; with references to some of his unidentified articles, by William E.A. Axon, pub. Adlard

1917

The Thorny Path of Literature [a Letter from Samuel Taylor Coleridge to Thomas Curnik. With an Introduction by William E. A. Axon [Reprinted 1917 from *The Nation* by Clement Shorter with a Foreword in which he describes WEAA as 'an indefatigable bookman and bibliophile']

1922

The Art of Cataloguing – reprinted in *The Library World*, 24-25, 1922. This was

originally in WEAA's *Handbook of the Public Libraries of Manchester and Salford*, published in1877

1923

Seventy-five years of the Vegetarian Society by William E.A. Axon and Ernest Axon, pub. Vegetarian Society

1927

New Year's Day [poem], Reprinted in *VM* 26, 1st January 1927

1947

One Hundred Years of the Vegetarian Society by Willam E.A. Axon and Ernest Action, pub. Vegetarian Society

1965

George Eliot's Use of Dialect, Kraus Reprint

1970

A bibliography of the works of Thomas Taylor by William E A Axon and James Jacob, Welsh Kindle Press

1977

Facsimile edition of ***An Architectural and General Description of the Town Hall Manchester,*** published by Manchester City Council for the 1977 Centenary

1982

Reprints of WEAA's articles Cheshire Proverbs, The Earthquake of 1777, Sunday Observance in Cheshire, The Wizard of Alderley

Edge, by Prism Books

1996

A Lancashire Treasury, Edited by Dawn Robinson-Walsh pub. Aurora

[This selection of WEAA's essays causes confusion as it is often taken to be an original work by WEAA.]

1998-1999 onwards

Continuation of ***Annals of Manchester*** in the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society journal, *Manchester Memoirs.*

2020

Inclusion of ***Hartshead Boggart and How it Was Laid by the Parson*** **as** Appendix in *South Manchester Supernatural: The Ghosts, Fairies, Boggarts and Superstitions of Victorian Gorton, Lees, Newton and Saddleworth by John Higson, edited by Simon Young*

c 2020

Malc Cowle, ***The Ancoats Skylark by William E A Axon narrated by Malc Cowle,***

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